

Governing AI in Participatory Journalism: Ethical Dilemmas and Press Freedom Implications

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Abstract

The growing use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools by news organizations is aimed, among others, at managing audience participation. From automatically moderating comments to evaluating user contributions, such tools can offer resource-saving solutions. Machine learning (ML) and natural language processing (NLP) tools are already used in everyday journalistic work, reducing costs and time for media organizations. However, the automation of such processes raises concerns about the possibility of unjustly restricting expression and strengthening censorship through algorithmic filters. At the same time, challenges appear on press freedom and the democratic role of journalism as an institution.

By studying several case studies of media organizations, this paper attempts to examine how the integration of AI in the management of participatory journalism can affect the relationship between media, audiences and freedom of expression. In particular, it explores how new regulatory tools – such as the EU AI Act – can ensure that technology will work in an empowering rather than restrictive way for freedom of expression and the press. The main objective is to lay the first theoretical foundations for a framework of guidelines and tools that will combine the innovation of AI with the protection of the fundamental principles of journalism, with an emphasis on transparency, accountability and the defense of press freedom.

Keywords: Participatory Journalism, Artificial Intelligence, Ethics, Press Freedom