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Filling a gap of information: Case of Convergence in municipalities when local media entrepreneurs take over communicating local news

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## **1. Introduction**

During the last decade there has been huge changes on the local media market all over the world. One main factor in the development is how local media companies have re-oriented their way of working, as for instance moving local reporters to head offices and at the same time shutting down local editorials. One consequence of this development is that municipalities on the countryside have been left without any apparent media platform for communication with their citizens (Cook et al 2016).

In this situation several trends are notable. First, the influence of organizations' communication departments on media content is continuously growing through new media practices (Macnamara 2016). Municipalities are developing new communication strategies at the same time as media organizations experience financial struggles with staff cut downs and closures as a consequence. Communication departments of some municipalities are built up with a budget and staff that is comparable to an entire newspaper office.

Professional roles are converging as it becomes usual for journalists to be recruited as communicators, and "change side" from reviewing information to carry information. Communication departments use journalistic methods and speak of themselves as an editorial rather than a communication department (White & Hobsbawm 2007).

Second, research of interconnections between mass media and work of organizations' communication departments mainly focuses on traditional media companies. As a consequence of massive shut down of mainstream media companies, local media entrepreneurs start their own media news agencies in purpose to fill the gap of information (Pickard & Stearns 2011; Barrett Ferrier 2013). Like the mainstream media, local media entrepreneurs also interact with municipalities in purpose of spreading information in communities. In this study, media entrepreneurship is widely defined as an independent media initiative not owned or operated by public service or media conglomerates.

Collaboration between municipalities and new established local media entrepreneurs can on several levels be interpreted as different kind of convergence. Working together with producing and publishing information and news the borders between info-PR and news journalism tends to converge, both as profession and content (Macnamara 2016).

The traditional role of local journalists is changing due to this development, similar when it comes to PR communicators at municipalities. The local media entrepreneurs in their role as local news reporters are perusing inexperienced ways of working, which has developed into a sort of hyper local journalism. They are also acting in a changed local media environment being entrepreneurs of news journalism and at the same time filling a gap of information in the society they are acting and operating in (Cook et al 2016).

### ***1.1 Object of the study and research questions***

The object of this study is to investigate the role of media entrepreneurs and their interaction with municipalities and organisations in order to supply their communities with hyperlocal news in places of media void. In this study cases from the Swedish local media market are used as samples.

RQ 1: How do the local media entrepreneurs experience their role in the local society?

RQ 2: How do the media entrepreneurs perceive interaction with municipality, local governments and organisations?

### ***1.2 The Swedish case***

Sweden is of particular interest as the transformations in the media landscape have been substantial in the country. Between 2004 and 2014, 100 local editorial offices in Sweden disappeared, which equals a third of all the local editorial offices in the country. During the same period, 25 per cent of the daily newspaper reporter jobs ceased to exist. Every fourth municipality in Sweden is now without a newsroom (Nygren et al. 2016).

Certain areas in Sweden have much less local media coverage compared to other European countries (Cook et al. 2016). The study Mapping the Road to Sustainability and Resilience, commissioned by Nesta, shows that some less populated areas in northern parts of Sweden completely lack local media coverage. In the most remote community, the distance between citizens and a journalist is 240km. Suburbs around large cities, also have limited media coverage. They are hardly covered by metropolitan newspapers and rely mainly on free-sheets. Stand-alone sites are quite rare. The Nesta study notes that local authorities in Sweden have expanded their public relations and information sector heavily in the last five to ten years (Cook et al. 2016).

However, in the wake of centralization and media void, independent hyperlocal initiatives in Sweden are breaking new ground. How they interact with local governments and organizations is both of national and international interest, as the changes in the journalism industry have been substantial in Sweden, and other countries may follow suit.

### ***1.3 Methods and material of the study***

This is at first hand a qualitative study including 19 in-depth interviews with 16 media entrepreneurs, two municipalities and one organization, where particularly interesting interactions occur.

Originally it is based on a complete mapping of the Swedish media market, which was done for the paper *Local Democracy and the Media: Can Hyperlocals Fill the Gap?* by Lottie Jangdal (2017), presented in the Journalism division of the NordMedia conference in Tampere, Finland, in August, 2017.

The study by Jangdal includes a review and a refinement of a published study in Sweden, “Hyperlokal Publicering”, by *Institutet för mediestudier* (Nygren et al., 2016). The study by Nygren et al. includes an overview of all 290 municipalities in Sweden, including public service offices for both radio and TV, local TV, local radio, paid printed newspapers, free newspapers, other printed titles, web actors (such as online news sites), newsletters and news blogs. From the complete total of approximately 1 000 media offices in Sweden, listed in the 2016 study, 39 were found that fit the following criteria:

1. The content has a news profile, with local content. The content cannot be limited to a specific subject or cause, or have a pronounced political agenda or political party as publisher or financer.
2. The media product has a digital online presence. It can have different publishing intervals and platforms, but one of its primary products must be digital.
3. The media venture has a local editorial office in the area that they cover.
4. The office or product is independent, i.e. not affiliated with public service or media houses/traditional media conglomerates, unless the office in question is organized as its own entity and not staffed by the mother company/head office.
5. The news must be presented in Swedish, at least partly. News products for Swedish minority languages are not included.

In addition to the material from Nygren et al. (2016), an additional 16 independent hyperlocals were discovered in Sweden, for a total of 55 hyperlocal independents, which serve as a base for this paper.

## 2. Theoretical framework

The last decade the conditions for local news reporting on the countryside have altered considerable. This can be also said about how municipalities and local organisations communicate in smaller communities. In many aspects they relate to each other. A municipality may need to communicate with the citizens and the traditional way of doing that has traditionally been through the local papers. This relationship has become an important element and condition for local journalism and local news reporting.

### 2.1 Local journalism in transition

Mark Deuze and Tamara Witschge (2017) imply that traditional journalism is under transition. What used to be established role and elements of journalism in the society (Kovacs & Rosenstiel, 2010) are under discussion both in theory and practice. This demands a re-definition of what news reporting is supposed to manifest within *post-industrial journalism*. Also the news work “asks for re-articulation” according to Deuze and Witschge (2017).

As a result of this development news reporting has become more of a co-operation with the public. News consumers can step in and comment news in real-time, also exchange information with the journalists and even shape stories on-line. Castell (2010) has described this phenomenon as networked journalism. One important part of this development is the individualization as Deuze and Witschge (2017) have pointed out, where journalists become entrepreneurs in journalism.

In this enterprising economy, entrepreneurial journalists increasingly start their own companies – somewhat similar to their colleagues elsewhere in the creative sector starting boutique advertising agencies or independent record labels, forming editorial or reportorial collectives as well as business start-ups (Deuze and Witschge, 2017: p. 11).

Recently another step in the development can be traced when local media entrepreneurs have turned up and started local media offices in purpose of taking over the news coverage. This have been done either in co-operation with the municipals or as a free run offices. In both examples the interaction with the municipals has turned out to be essential for the local media entrepreneurs and their news work (Macnamara, 2016).

This has created new conditions for local journalism and also public relations. Journalists and for instance local politicians, administrators, people of the PR-departments at the municipals have to learn to communicate in new ways. In interacting and co-operating with each other there are signs of convergence (Kolodzy et al 2014).

## ***2.2 Converging practices of journalism and PR***

Various researchers describe the interaction between journalists and PR practitioners as a field of tension (DeLorme & Fedler 2003), as paradoxical and uneasy one (Macnamara 2014, Koch 2016), featuring as it does mutual dependence and mutual distrust (White & Hobsbawn 2007) and often described as love-hate relationship. On the one hand, as an instrument of PR, the practitioners communicate and advocate the particular interests, on the other hand, they resemble journalistic publications from which readers expect critical, unbiased, and objective reporting (Koch 2016). The transactional information exchanges between PR practitioners and journalists are and have been central to news production. It is usually characterised as an “interdependent” (Cornelissen 2011) relationship or even a “symbiosis” (Bentele & Nothhaft 2008). Even if the incorporation of media releases and other PR material into the news by journalists is not a new phenomenon, the apparent change is in the scale and regularity in which this is happening, as Jackson & Moloney (2016) point out.

Social media is changing the practice of PR (Bajkiewitz et al 2011), and this affect relationship between PR practitioners and journalists, and contribute to the more elusive professional roles. Professional disruption of journalism concerns the structural and commercial developments of the media industry that have led to changes in the economic model of news and, in turn, journalism practice (Jackson & Moloney 2016). Journalists are under increasing pressure to produce copy for multiple outlets, making them increasingly deskbound and less able to give attention to the crucial practices of fact-checking and independent navigation (Davies 2008, Franklin & Carlson 2010). The PR industry continues to grow - frequently employing ex-journalists (Moloney, Jackson & McQueen 2013).

The crisis in journalism, caused by collapsing media business models and journalists' job losses, continuing growth of PR worldwide, and the so-called “democratization of media”, which is providing avenues for media content production and distribution, are escalating the influence of PR (Macnamara 2016). Research is beginning to explore how it might be changing media relations, with more exchanges taking place over digital platforms (Bajkiewicz, Kraus & Hong 2011), and the content of PR-material changing towards richer media content (Yoo & Kom 2013).

Some researchers are discussing “PR-isation” of journalism – a phenomenon occurring within the news media, which is commonly described as “churnalism” (Davies 2008). Churnalism – the use of unchecked PR material in news – is viewed as an outcome of the broader process of structural and professional change. Within PR spheres, concerns about PR-isation have been evident for some years. PR industry expresses concerns about the independence of much contemporary journalism (Jackson & Moloney 2016). For them, churnalism erodes trust in journalism, hence the message is weaker.

As Smith (2008) notes, journalism and PR are converging around new developments of social media, and analysis of the intersections of journalism and PR needs to be updated to include these developments.

### ***2.3 Interdependence and networks for media entrepreneurs***

Hyperlocal media independents are characterized by limited topics or geographic coverage areas, but vary widely in the type and dependability of funding that supports their operations (Kurpius et al., 2010). These media operations struggle to create a sustainable funding model. The low cost of entry is an advantage for hyperlocals, but almost all of them are subsidy-driven rather than market-driven. According to Kurpius (2010), they are often reliant on private donations. Relationships with non-media entities, however, could partly mitigate that problem. A hybrid model of local news could, for example, include a partnership with the police, sharing stories with mutual benefits (Carson et al., 2016).

The growth of hyperlocal news websites with community orientation has attracted increased attention of researchers in the United Kingdom. A study of hyperlocal revenues in the UK and Europe calls the independent hyperlocal ecosystem a “messy sector” (Cook et al., 2016), implying that there are numerous prototypes, variations on funding and sustainability deviances. There are interdependencies between people and partnerships in the local setting that are dynamic and imbalanced. Hyperlocal media landscape is dominated by high levels of entry and exit. Cook et al. (2016) point out that where local governments and municipalities improve their own communication directly to citizens, hyperlocal media services face limited opportunities.

Mixed funding models can assure stability and longevity (Kurpius et al., 2010). Harte, Turner and Williams (2016) were not surprised to see the level of take-up of grant initiatives; for some of the hyperlocals, this was a key part of their work. There has been a direct appeal to the British government for support and recognition to the sector, with calls for reviews to a skewed media regulatory climate (Harte et al., 2016). Researchers in the United Kingdom conclude subsidies may be needed (Barnett and Townend, 2015).

Although there can be economic advantages that come with cooperation and partnerships, in addition to a possible flow of material, establishing interactions between media companies and local governments or organisations can impact credibility. Freedom of the press has typically been associated with the ability of journalists to do their job free from interference. This is crucial for independent news production. A free news media would encourage plurality, protecting and enhancing a diversity of media content – a task that has never been more vital (Fenton, 2011).

### **3. Result**

The empirical result from in-depth interviews with hyperlocal media entrepreneurs, people representing municipalities and local organisations are presented in two parts. The first one represents the local media entrepreneur points of view concerning their role as news journalists in the local communities. In the second part, the media

entrepreneurs' perception of interaction with local governments and organisations are presented.

### 3.1 Media entrepreneurs' experience of their role in the local community

All of the entrepreneurial media initiatives in this study stem from a strong community engagement. In the entrepreneurs' role as working journalists, many of the interviewees see themselves as classic news reporters, concerning elements of how journalism is supposed to comprise (Kovacs & Rosenstiel, 2010). Their goal is to perform qualitative journalism, bringing up current issues that involves the local population of the area they cover.

One of the interviewee, at the print paper magazine *Horisont Gotland*, claims that their superior motivation for starting a newspaper was the intention of producing qualitative news journalism, telling stories that otherwise wouldn't be told.

Same as the reporters at *Horisont Gotland* the journalists at for instance *iTrosa*, *Skillingaryd nu* and *Tidningen Skärgården* started out with the goal of producing local news that would be of interest for a local population. As the reporter at *iTrosa* says she notice a gap of information to be filled:

*The established paper tends to ignore Trosa and the surrounding area. They don't report about events from here so obvious people feel left out. Also the municipality feel overlooked not getting important information covered by the ordinary paper.*

As motivation for starting up news sites, some entrepreneurs mention dissatisfaction with the existing media monitoring. Reporter from *Bollebygdsnyheter* has noticed that sometimes they update information more frequently. The reporter of *Dagens Vimmerby* has observed that news coverage of the established local media leaves locally important information out, due to lack of the knowledge of the local community: *"There is a large information deficit as in many municipalities, which I think that we are trying to fill"*.

Another interviewee, managing her own site *Bjuvsnytt*, stresses that she feels she contribute to the community offering a forum for debate the citizen can't find anywhere else:

*It's so useful that I find that some readers think I have to start my own party. They get more from me when I "dissect" the elderly care than when they meet the municipal council. They say, "We're lucky to have you," and "Push them", (...).*

To be a forum for local debates is an object that several of the interviewed brings up as important. Reporter from *Alekuriren* says that one ambition is *"to be the spokesperson to the municipality"* and continues to state that he sees his role as local media entrepreneur and reporter as protector of democracy in the two municipalities he is covering. Guardian of democracy is something that several of the participants in the study mentions as essential in their work as local journalists, as for instance one of the



reporters at *Tidningen Skärgården*: *I want to stand free from influences from authorities and act as a defender of democracy in the local society.*

Another interviewee, who's worked as a community reporter for mainstream media for several decades, says the ability to cover local politics has diminished over time. There is no longer the same focus on working the old journalism routines, scrutinizing what local politicians do and propose. Instead, the local coverage by traditional media has been reduced to quick reports with "click bait". Her ambition in the community of Ockelbo is to feed residents with important information, so they can use their democratic rights and be aware of what's going on:

*Being aware of local politics gives people a chance to influence. It's a democratic issue. Investigative reporting needs to be a part of that. People need to know when politicians do wrong, in order to not be passive consumer of news.*

The *hyperlocal* focus on the immediate community is important to everyone interviewed in this study. The editor of *321an*, is proud of their journalism having forced politicians to change their mind on important community issues:

*The local government has several times tried to close down the senior high school, but our coverage has made a difference and contributed to the forming of citizens' groups. We still have our school!*

The local media entrepreneurship faces both opportunities and challenges. One positive aspect of entrepreneurship is the freedom to do what they consider as hyper local journalism. After been working at established papers, being employee and told to keep up with the standpoints of the papers, they see themselves as free from partisan opinions.

On the other hand they are working under pressure to keep up their ambitions, fill the space with relevant local news. The economical resources are small and they have to do most of the work by them selves; doing research, reporting, editing, and distributing. Whilst doing one of the interviews with one of the reporters at *Horisont Gotland*, he is sitting in his car, driving around and handing out the paper to subscribers.

### **3.2 The media entrepreneurs' perception of interaction with municipalities, local governments and organisations**

A majority of the interviewees in this study have established interactions with the local governments in the municipalities in which they are located. Jackson & Moloney (2016) point out that PR material into the news by journalists is not something new. The major change is in the scale and regularity in which this is happening. The study shows variations of interaction, spanning from outright partnerships, to being in regular contact with staff of the municipalities as sources for stories, to receiving press releases and writing about them, and finally to investigative reporting with no directly interaction with local governments.

One of the rural entrepreneurs in this study stem from a municipality initiative. The ski resort of Åre municipality launched a project in the 1990's in order to increase citizen influence. A positive response from the community residents has resulted in a subscription paper, which is still alive today. Another examples of outright partnership with governments and organizations are the national freelance coop *Njus* and *Radio Norden* in Kramfors. *Njus* have received start-up funding from Sweden's innovation agency *Vinnova*, which is a part of Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation.

In the town of Kramfors in central Sweden, the municipality was on board from the beginning when initiators behind *Radio Norden*, wanted to start a media company in 2016. The municipality helped fund the start-up and has also a representative in a control group that discuss strategy decisions. As part of the same group, is also an employee from *Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund*, ABF, which stands for the Workers' Educational Association, Sweden's largest adult liberal education association (ABF, 2017). The initiator behind the radio station sees no liability danger with the co-operations in place:

*(...) I don't see any danger in establishing cooperation; the issue is rather how it is formed. For us it's absolutely necessary to have the local government involved, as our undertaking includes community participation and immigration integration.*

The municipality of Kramfors realizes there is a big advantage in being directly involved:

*We're a cofounder and co-applicant for grants. We see this project as a possibility to provide information to residents and people from other countries.*

"Symbiosis" (Bentele & Nothhaft 2008) between municipality and the media entrepreneur are noticed in several cases studied. Involvement of municipalities can be expressed in many ways and be more or less obvious. Being a part of media funding is one of the possible ways. It's common among the entrepreneurs in this study having applied for grants, either for starting up or special projects.

One entrepreneur in central Sweden received funding from the *European Regional Development Fund*, which grants money for innovation and research, the digital agenda, and support for small and medium-sized enterprises (European Commission, 2017). A grant from them allowed the media entrepreneur *Sydnärkenytt* to hire a project leader and build up a necessary network. In addition, municipality has contracted the media entrepreneur to supply web-TV from municipal meetings, but one of the founders of this particular media venture, would like municipalities to go much further than that:

*Traditional media doesn't have the time and resources to report on everything. Meanwhile the local governments spend millions on their communication departments, cabling out information. Instead they could just as well fund an independent editorial office that covers the municipality.*

The PR-industry is continuously employing ex-journalists (Moloney, Jackson & McQueen 2013) for writing reports on behalf of the municipality. In one countryside community of Sweden, Ockelbo, municipality have hired a journalist with several decades of local

community reporting experience, who took the initiative for collaboration. A partnership was formed and the journalist is hired as a “writer”.

Media entrepreneurs make definitions of their roles, in some cases removing themselves from being called journalists, as the reporter of *Bollebygdsnyheter*. The study shows how collaboration and partnerships between municipalities and media entrepreneurs contribute to allusive, “liquid” professional roles as also Franklin and Carlson (2010) notice.

*Sometimes people get angry at what I've written. Those who are really angry call me a journalist. And I'm not a journalist, I do not consider myself a journalist but a writer and possibly a photographer.*

The interaction between hyper local media entrepreneurs and local government is a complex process, including both interrelated and contradictory goals of municipality as well as the entrepreneur. The municipalities may have a goal to present their own information but are also keen of being visible in the independent, investigative news sites, since “churnalism” experiences as eroding trust in messages, as Jackson & Moloney (2016) states. The Municipal Chief in Ockelbo is pleased with the set-up, but is aware of a potential credibility issue:

*However, there is a credibility risk with this arrangement. An internal writer cannot replace traditional media in that matter, but her reporting is neutral. She has a journalistic background with a large level of integrity. We have received very positive feedback from the community.*

Credibility is one of the issues that both local governments and media entrepreneurs are aware of and concerned about. Changing practice of PR mutually affect changing practices of journalism, which raises questions if independent journalism is possible at all. One the media entrepreneurs in most northern communities of the interviewees of this study, stresses the importance of journalistic independence, when having contracts with municipalities:

*We have to handle PR for the municipality carefully. We have to nurse our credibility. We don't have the same clear boundaries as traditional media although they have connections too, that the general public is not aware of.*

Journalists of mainstream media are, as i.a. Davies (2008) notice, increasingly deskbound and less able to give attention to the crucial practices of fact-checking and independent navigation. Hyperlocal media entrepreneurs are not deskbound as they work locally and usually have a good contact with and knowledge of the local community, as for instance the owner of *Bollebygdsnyheter*:

*I have direct contact with the municipal council. And we speak on the phone on a regular basis. There are good contacts. They often use me (...); they call if they want to get something out.*

Local media entrepreneurs have knowledge of the local community that is hardly available for the deskbound journalists of the increasingly centralized regional media. It

allows media entrepreneurs to establish closer contacts with municipalities and monitor their activities and decisions. As the entrepreneur from *Bjuvsnytt* expresses herself:

*(...) I have access to it simply because I'm closer to reality than the reporters who travel here from Helsingborg or Malmö. They only take what is told in the press releases and publish it.*

Spreading of PR-material from municipalities' homepages or publishing information that has been conducted from direct interaction with the local politicians can have various reasons and meet different goals for the media entrepreneur. Municipality information can function as a complement when the entrepreneur has no time or energy to write other articles, as the news site has to keep a fair amount of activity to attract readers. Since local governments have low visibility in regional news (Paek et al, 2005), even reposted information from municipalities' homepage can serve the residents with a contextualized picture of what happens in the local community, though the news value of such reposts can be questioned.

Another reason why information from municipalities takes place in the local news site is how the entrepreneur understands his contribution to the democratic processes in the local community, as the citation of *Bollebygdsnyheter* illustrates:

*I think it's important to help and spread (information). Municipal politics receives so many complaints today, but the basis for democracy lies in it.*

Several media entrepreneurs have a strongly expressed position as a watchdog that monitors municipal policy, to keep residents informed. The entrepreneur may view the hyper local news site as a powerful institution that has ability to influence the local politics, and the perceived influence may stimulate further interaction between local government and media entrepreneur:

#### **4. Conclusions**

The local media entrepreneurs' role as journalists can take different shapes and be perceived in various ways. The entrepreneurs may view themselves as traditional news reporters. Their goal is to perform high-quality journalism, monitor local politics and local events as well as giving voice to the community residents. Among descriptions of the media entrepreneurs' role can we also find some distancing from the traditional perception of a reporter, the entrepreneurs regarding themselves as "writers" rather than journalists. This view is represented of both media entrepreneurs that are contracted by municipalities and those who interact with the local authorities less regularly and on free basis.

The main ambition by the hyper local media entrepreneurs is to act as professional media actors that promote conversation among the community residents, local governments and organisations and can be summarized in the illustration below:

<b>The perceived professional role/function</b>	<b>Expression of the role</b>
Filling the media void in the local society	Serve as a forum for local debate, providing space for diverse local voices.
Function as watchdogs/democracy protectors	Monitor local governments and influence their decisions.
Providing qualitative hyper local news	Provide frequent, quickly updated local information and nuanced news.

The media void is considered a main purpose with the establishment of the hyper local news initiatives. The media entrepreneurs view their news sites and papers as an important part of the local community, filling the media void when the regional papers do not cover the local news or do it sporadically and incompletely, for example, primarily reporting crimes. The hyper local news sites, according to the media entrepreneurs, provide a conversation and information room for local governments and organisations, as well as reporting of local events that are relevant for the community.

The media entrepreneurs stress their role as guardians of democracy, but there are a variety of ways this role comes to expression. Both having tight interaction with local governments and in other cases, not having any direct contacts with municipalities, can be seen as an act of democracy protection. Strong interrelationship with municipalities can mean that the media entrepreneurs' knowledge of local politics enables the entrepreneurs to set some pressure on political decisions. The ability to act as a watchdog depends on relationship the local governments and media entrepreneurs have. Media entrepreneurs contracted to the municipalities as their spokesmen have likely other conditions for investigative reporting than the entrepreneurs who's contact with municipalities involves questioning. The other view presented by the media entrepreneurs is that investigative journalism is only possible when the reporters have no direct interaction with the local governments.

Role of hyper local media entrepreneur in interaction with local governments can be described as diverse: the interaction varies in scale from no direct communication to an intense interaction. The interaction may be initiated mainly by the local politicians or by the media entrepreneurs, usually in different situations or for different purposes.

<b>Driving force</b>	<b>Level of interaction</b>	
Municipality	High	Low
Entrepreneur	High	Low

We observe various levels/modes of interaction, as follows:

- **No direct communication/personal interaction.** The entrepreneurs want to be kept as independent as possible by monitoring the local governments without interacting with them, but rather use available information about the decisions and work processes of the municipality.
- **Regular interaction – the municipality/local politicians are the driving force,** In this case, the entrepreneur have a direct contact with the municipal council. The media entrepreneurs' goal is to help the municipality to spread information.
- **Sporadic interaction. The municipality is initiating interaction in order to make the "good news".** Some media entrepreneurs experience that the local politicians seek contact with the entrepreneur with intention to inform about the events/decisions that sets the municipality into a positive context.
- **Interaction on regular basis – critical voice.** In this case, the media entrepreneur is seeking contact with the municipality, with intention to question their decisions or getting information about a specific event/decision.

The case of different levels of convergence of journalistic roles and PR/communication practices entails new conditions for local journalism and communicating local news. What kind of consequences to the local communities and for democratic processes it may have, need further investigation. The hyper local media entrepreneurs fill partly the existing media void by acting as an arena for local conversation. Though, most of them are economically vulnerable and have different ambitions with their news sites. More or less visible involvement of municipalities and organisations have likely an impact on what kind of news and how they are reported, depending on the media entrepreneurs perception of their relationship with the different stakeholders and on the perceived role as a professional media entrepreneur – and also on how they understand a qualitative local journalism.

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