



**Analysis of three models of literary
journalism on the internet:
Anfibia (Argentina), *Narratively* (United States) and
FronteraD (Spain)**

José María Albalad Aiguabella

INTERNATIONAL DOCTORAL THESIS

Director: Dr. Jorge Miguel Rodríguez

SAN JORGE UNIVERSITY
School of Communication
Villanueva de Gállego, Zaragoza
April 2016



**Analysis of three models of literary
journalism on the internet:
Anfibia (Argentina), *Narratively* (United States) and
FronteraD (Spain)**

José María Albalad Aiguabella

INTERNATIONAL DOCTORAL THESIS

Director: Dr. Jorge Miguel Rodríguez

SAN JORGE UNIVERSITY
School of Communication
Villanueva de Gállego, Zaragoza
April 2016

INDEX OF CONTENTS

1.	Introduction.....	7
2.	Conclusions.....	23
2.1.	Partial conclusions.....	23
2.2.	General conclusions.....	27
3.	Digital version (complete).....	31

INTRODUCTION

Telling stories has been my passion since I was Little. It is said that, at 5 years old, I used to enliven family gatherings, in front of the wood stove that warmed my house in the village, with enthusiastic stories: I collected the news from the shepherdess, that what I've heard in the flea market, the scene seen through the window of the stable or the great feats with my first bycicle, a white and red Akimoto bike, that I still carry it, tatuated in the scar of my chin.

At that time, the street was already my lab. I enjoyed wearing the shoe sole away, and also the bike tires, observing, listening... and telling. My ambition was so strong that, from then on, i am still trying to keep. Because the recipe is everlasting: being (sometimes where you are not allowed), moving, looking over, being surprised, investigating, empathizing with people, in conclusion, looking the world through the eyes of the child we once were.

Maybe, that is why, as a journalist, I have never been captivated by the harshness of the inverted pyramid, nor a job developed –just- surrounded by cameras and screens. I tremble from emotion facing the possibility of giving voice to those who often go unheard,

revealing with real faces the inequalities covered up just by numbers, going deep into a jungle or into a monastery to discover how their residents live; understanding the baker's, the carpenters's or the youth tribe's lifestyles; or finding out how are the celebrities's lives, who are just as much of flesh and blood as we are.

Delving into the human condition by this kind of short stories, entails that what I did when I was little, without realizing it: reporting. In the 21st century, where you only need a few clicks to buy a pizza or learn how to make an explosive, the art of real storytelling is more alive than ever. Despite my interest in *storytelling*, when in November 2011, the University of San Jorge (USJ) granted me a fellowship to get the doctorate (replaced in 2012 for a scholarship of lecturer training from The Spanish Ministry of Education), I opted for the area of public relations. In some way, because the USJ grant entailed taking a Master degree in Marketing and Corporate Communication. That lead me, at the beginning, to plan a doctorate focussed in the strategic communication of the organizations in digital culture.

The proposal of the vice-dean at that time, Jorge Miguel Rodríguez, who offered to include me in the investigation group “El periodismo como espacio creativo en Aragón, del papel a la web 2.0”¹, meant a turning point in my career. The work in the group, which at that moment was dealing with the relation between journalism and literature in all kinds of formats, led me to study the macro-genre of literary journalism. I had not enough knowledge to come up with a doctoral thesis in that field, but, little by little, under the guidance of professor Rodríguez, I began to go in depth into the topic.

The path was full of ups and downs, as I had to start with almost nothing. The Journalism and Literature conferences were very useful, bootstrapped by the investigation group, to which the thesis was assigned. In those annual meetings, there are summoned journalists, writers and academics from Spain, Latin America and Europe, to reflect on the validity of narrative journalism. Thanks to those scientific lectures, which recently insist on the need to study how the journalistic-literary models go through the current paradigm shift in technological field, I observed an increase of digital magazines providing long stories of peaceful reading, amid the online world promptness.

¹ After its union with the group “Medios de comunicación y campañas electorales en Aragón”, since September 2014, it is called “Comunicación, Periodismo, Política y Ciudadanía”, renowned as a established group by the Aragon's Government. Cfr. <http://periodismoypolitica.com>, checked in December 10th 2015.

Immediately I got excited with the non-science fiction short stories of some of those contemporary publications: in *Orsai*, *FronteraD* and *Anfibia*, as to mention three distinguished examples, and I found there the reports and the profiles I would like to publish as a journalist. By having previously worked in the *Heraldo de Aragón* online edition, where the priority in the last new and the limited workforce made almost impossible going out to the street to look for stories, at least in working hours, I began to get interested in literary journalism models, and I wondered if they were financially stable.

Thus, the blueprint to get the Master in Marketing and Corporative Communication was considered, under professor Rodriguez guidance, this thesis director, as a approach the publishing model and the business of five of those publications: the print ones *Orsai* (2011) and *Panenka* (2011), and the digital ones *FronteraD* (2009), *Jot Down* (2011) and *Anfibia* (2011). The target of the investigation was to analyse the keys of their redaction routines and marketing strategies, to set out a larger scale study based on the results.

The choice of two Hispanic information media –*Anfibia* and *Orsai*- took place because the source of inspiration of the Spanish projects were the Latin American and United States role models. This made me undertake a bibliographic review of the nature of literary journalism² with the purpose of knowing its history in Spain, Latin America and United States; and at the same time undertaking a review of the main reflections of the connection between journalism and literature in the spanish sphere. Therefore, I tried to get basic notions of the study. Also, I found it necessary to use a mixed qualitative analysis of the media previously mentioned (descriptive analysis of the products and in-depth interviews) that allowed me to reach the two starting points (Rodríguez and Albalad, 2012, 2013):

- a) The digital community is noticeable by the information overload –*infoxication*-, fruit of the continuous publication that the network allows. Thus, due to the production

² The bibliographic research began with scientific magazines, including the following: “Journalism Studies”, “Literary Journalism Studies”, “Journal of Communication”, “Question/Cuestión”, “Revista de Jornalismo ESPM”, “Science Communication”, “New Media & Society”, “Doxa Comunicación”, “Revista Latina de Comunicación Social”, “El profesional de la información”, “Ámbitos”, “Comunicación y Sociedad”, “Anàlisi”, “Textual & Visual Media”, “Telos”, “Trípodos”, “Zer”, “Comunicar”, “Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico”, “Historia y Comunicación Social”, “Icono14”, “Revista Mexicana de Comunicación” and “Cuadernos de literatura”. The access was facilitated by several database: “Dialnet”, “EBSCO”, “Google Scholar” and “Latindex”, and it was finished, in the library of The University of Navarra and of The University of New York.

cycles 24/7 (twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week) do not get better informed citizens, literary journalism initiatives have come up taking advantage of the low entry barriers to the internet, to make their way telling slow production and quiet consumption stories. Even though it is about printed version projects, all of them are in cyberspace too – in one way or another- to take advantage of the decrease of the four classic points in the *marketing mix*: price, product, distribution and promotion.

- b) The emblematic magazines of the English-style literary journalism appeared in the 20th century –*The New Yorker* (1925), *Esquire* (1933), *Rolling Stone* (1967), *Mother Jones* (1976), etc.– inspired the creation of the latin american model media in narrative journalism: *El Malpensante*, 1996; *The Clinic*, 1999; *Letras Libres*, 1999; *Gatopardo*, 1999; or *Etiqueta Negra*, 2002. At the same time, these printed publications, constituted role models –due to their journalistic quality- for the digital media appeared in Latin America and United States in the 21st century. In addition, American projects have a direct influence in Spain, a country where literary journalism has been traditionally practiced, mostly in articulism/columnism (León Gross, 2005; López Pan, 2011) and there have not been relevant precedents as the mentioned ones in the other two geographic areas. That is why, when considering a magazine focused on narrative journalism, the new spanish digital media (annex 2) put the spotlight on the publishing bets across the Atlantic.

As a result of this initial study, the thesis was faced with a documentary and experimental solid ground. After consulting several experts, among those who stand out include professor Fernando López Pan and Miguel Ángel Jimeno (2014) of the University of Navarra, I was clear about the difference between the real and the ideal publishing model; and that required a reduction in the number of the case studies to be able to undertake an in-depth study. In light of this situation, I thought it would be appropriate to present three native digital media of different geographical areas: one of them from Spain, because of the development of narrative journalism in the digital age, and two of them from Latin America and United States, because the new spanish media are inspired by them, due to the influence of the Latin America chronicle and the English-speaking *New Journalism*.

From then on, I opted for two of the magazines I firstly analysed in the Master: *FronteraD* (2009, Madrid) and *Anfibia* (2012, Buenos Aires). And I added a third one from the english-speaking world to complete what the thesis required (Spain, Latin America and United States): *Narratively*, founded in New York in 2012. In this way, I made a selection that shows different cultural, linguistic and journalistic practices, and at the same time it provides a dialogue between traditions (it is represented the three fields mentioned above). ¿Why these cases and not any of the other digital media being made slowly and carefully that I gather in the second annex?

- a) *FronteraD* meant a turning point in the Spanish publishing offer, trying to copy the New Yorker's weekly paper formula in Spain, with a publishing offer centered in literary journalism with a narrative structure, far from the hegemony of articulism/columnism. Although, the publication of reports and profiles, took place in newspapers and magazines throughout the 20th and 21st century, and it is common in Sunday supplements like *XL Semanal* (grupo Vocento), *Crónica (El mundo)* or *El País Semanal*, before the beginning of *FronteraD*, I did not find any appearance –neither in paper nor in the internet- comparable to the American ones. This happened despite the fact that, as I point out in paragraph two, there was an attempt with *Lateral*, in the nineties.

The change of direction is shown by numerous *start-ups* appeared since 2009 under the premise of betting on the main narrative genres in journalism, and due to the fact that they have to face the absence of native precedents, they pay attention to the Latin American and US reference media. Although there are other similar media with favourable results in economic terms, like *Jot Down Magazine* (Rodríguez and Albalad, 2013), I have chosen *FronteraD* due to its cared-for contents, result of an edition I did not find in *Jot Down*, for example, in the pilot study. Even with a precarious structure, *FronteraD*, has been transformed into a *site* “followed and appreciated” by the New American Journalism Foundation (FNPI), and it meets better the requirements of literary journalism displayed in the first part of the thesis.

- b) *Anfibia* came up in May 2012, with a Project that gives to the internet the rich tradition of Latin American narrative journalism and that gives its own signature:

the *amphibiety*, term used to allud to the pieces –four-hand- made between journalists and academics. This characteristic entails the setting-up of duos, pairs of narrators and researchers, academics or experts that create attractive journalistic pieces – with narrative appeal- without forgeting about the theoretical basis. Additionally, it includes its prototype in a public University which supports the initiative as well as finances the experimental researches in laboratories. In this way, as opposed to the emerging projects that start without support, *Anfibia* has the required financial resources to perform its activity guaranteed: 230,000 euros. Proof of it is that, following the emblematic paper magazines style, (like *Etiqueta Negra*, in Latin America, and *The New Yorker*, in The United States), it has exacting *online* publishers that guarantee the quality of the contents while it does a teaching activity – of research and writing- among their writers.

- c) *Narratively*, launched in September 2012, earned 50,000 dollars in a *crowdfunding* campaign to tell stories of New York city. Since March 2013, it has an international view, but it keeps the original essence: dealing weekly with a topic, with five publications (one each day, monday to friday, in different formats). With this work philosophy, in 2013 he got the sixth position in the ranking list of the best webs of the world, annually made by the TIME magazine. Aditinally, it gives an original funding system. In The United States, as it is specified in chapter two, *literary journalism*, is consolidated more than 50 years, so there is no discussion about the validity of the genre, as there is in Latin American sphere: its struggle is to make profitable the business model. For that, it has been created the *Narratively Creative Group*, a way of paralell business – with favourable results- that provides communication services to the media, businesses, non-profit organizations and NGOs; and it expects to make the leap to the book, cinema and TV industry, adapting the magazine contents.

At this point, I reinforced the basic notions of the matter, and I undertook a second bibliographic research, focused on digital sphere. This stage revealed that investigations on digital media, usual since the beginning of the Internet (Díaz Noci, 1997; García Santamaría, 2014; Salaverría 2016), did not aim for the *sites* that “miss” the breaking news. However, the rise of the online literary journalism, the antidote against immediacy, has brought back the academic interest: Reinoso, 2013; Hiatt, 2014; Lassila-Merisalo, 2014;

Neveu, 2014; Rosique-Cedillo y Barranquero-Carretero, 2015; Albalad and Rodríguez, 2015, as well as other ongoing projects.

Chosen the three cases, and confirmed the existence –just- of the approximate studies to their corresponding models, I found a method to the evaluation of the online media that could adjust to the interests: “Quality journalism versus new journalistic digital formats. Design of a validation tool”. I got the clue in the book “La calidad periodística. Teorías, investigaciones y sugerencias profesionales” (2013), where it was cited. Due to not finding it in any catalogue, I made contact with the publisher: professor García Gordillo of the University of Sevilla, who explained that the tool did not come to an end because of the lack of funding.

The absence of standardised procedures for the study of literary journalism digital media, made me to design my own tool based on the VAP -*Valor Agregado Periodístico*-method (Gómez Mompart, Gutiérrez Lozano and Palau Sampio, 2013; Pellegrini and Mujica, 2006). The idea was to know each model by a text analysis. With the intention of making an exhaustive investigation, I worked for two months on the elaboration of a code, that it is composed of five categories, with its corresponding indicators: (1) analysis unit; (2) content analysis; (3) narratological analysis; (4) stylistic analysis; and (5) formal analysis: design. At the time to make a pre-test, I advised that limiting the study to a corpus of articles may be useful to delve into the content, but I understood that, before considering such a deepening, it is advisable an overview of the structures. Looking for that context, I decided to keep the tool for a pos-doctoral analysis and I set out the following questions to investigate: how did the magazines appeared? Which were the incentives? Which were the human and financial resources? How is the production process? And the distribution and promotion? What problems do they face? What has been its evolution? Are they self-sufficient? What expectations do they have?

In this way, I chose a descriptive study that offered multiple views of the organizations, portrayed the *newsroom* with a comprehensive view (founding, value chain, journalistic routines, etc.) and gave an answer to the five targets of the thesis:

1. Know the foundation and implementation of the three selected media: origins, philosophy and problems encountered.

2. Find out the incidence of classic literary journalism in the publications. What aspects do they inherit from Latin American chronicle and the *New Journalism*? Do they introduce changes?
3. Show remarkable qualities of each model: staff, editorial department, websites or significance (commonalities and divergences).
4. Find out if there is intention to adapt the plasticity of literary journalism to the versatility of multimedia language. Although it is not considered a content analysis, as it was seen, it is interesting to know the degree of digital mentality in journalistic routines of each editorial department.
5. Know the financial situation of the initiatives: evolution, devised formulas, expectations and future plans, to know if literary journalism is a profitable business for either the media or their authors.

Based on these objectives, and taking into account the dynamics of the models discussed in the Master's dissertation (Rodríguez and Albalad, 2012, 2013), I started with three hypotheses:

1. The dissected websites are result of the journalist's spirits, unsatisfied with the short-lived information in the internet. And that is why they decide to found literary-journalistic magazines without any either advanced business or marketing knowledge.
2. The three media recreate the writing patterns of usual newspapers and magazines, in such a way that they do not conform to the internet language. This makes us to talk about "analogical products" in the internet.
3. The analysed projects are going through an uncertain financial situation: far from a stable financial system, they survive by means of free contributions by freelance writers and photographers, or by means of a limited advertising investment.

To achieve the goals and verify or refute the hypotheses, I was based upon the combination of two qualitative procedures promoted by the Newsmaking theory: ethnography – direct systematic observation- and in-depth interviews. This way, I accented the sense of the procedures, by an interpretational analysis, not statistical, useful to highlighting the nuances. ¿Why these two techniques and in this certain order?. Direct systematic observation allows to know what workers do “as any ethnographer discovers that in many cases it is not the same what workers say they do with what they actually do” (Paterson and Domingo, 2008:2). For its part, interviews provide context and they help to understand “people’s attitudes and incentives” (Berger, 2000: 113).

¿How methodology was applied? First of all, I had to make contact with the editors to ensure the access. After explaining the investigation in detail (vía *Skype* and email), the people in charge agreed on the usefulness of its development and they opened up the doors of the editorial department to me. Then, it began a long way to go that lead me to Buenos Aires, New York and Madrid to work on the ground. The good willingness of the magazines made easier the planning of the journeys, because I had to come to terms with the times established by the FPU scholarship (each stay could not be more than three months and the deadline for the thesis defense was on October 31st 2016).

In December 2013, I received the authorization from The Spanish Ministry of Education (and from The University of San Jorge, institute where the grant was assigned), to travel to Buenos Aires, between June 1st and August 1st, 2014, and to New York, between September 15th and December 15th of the same year. I scheduled the work in Madrid between January and June 2015: geographical proximity made easier a two-day trip, each month, rather than a long stay as I did in foreign cities, also, in this case, it would have been impossible, because I was lecturing on “Written Communication” at the USJ (February-June 2015). Once I had scheduled this roadmap, I adapted the methodology to each case:

a) Descriptive analysis of websites

First of all, in order to face the investigation with some prior knowledge, I analysed the virtual spaces: sections, contents, equipment, interfaces, visual beat, advertising, sponsorships, weight of social networks, frequency of updates, technical problems, etc. The

results showed common patterns: the timelessness of the articles, its long extension (more than 1,500 words on average), the shortage of multimedia resources, covering issues that are out of the media agenda, the reduced presence of advertisers and the existence of teams of no more than fifteen people who rely on extensive networks of collaborators.

I applied this analysis to all three cases, during February and March 2014 by the “*semana construida*” method, a stratified random example that allows the generalization of behaviour (Teramo, 2006). With this approach it is distinguished between what is punctual, any extraordinary bet, and what is usual. The study was conducted by the guide available in Annex 3.1.: designed from the identified criteria in previous studies (Master’s dissertation), assumed a useful guidance.

b) **Etnography: systematic direct observation**

The information obtained from the websites, as well as the provided by the directors in the first contact with them, revealed the need to implement a double -face-to-face and virtual- ethnography. Due to the weight that currently supports the online work, the observation can not be limited to the physical editorial departments (Soriano, 2011). Despite the freedom of the technique—"it has a free character that allows you to start with virtually a blank diary" (Iglesias Garcia, 2012: 11)-, I designed a fact sheet with codes for the face-to-face and virtual observation (annex 3.2).

This tool, which includes parameters such as the routines of production, communication and silence, behaviours (spontaneity, versatility, motivation, stress, etc.) or programmes used for online interaction, intended to ensure the systematicity in the search. I performed the observation process following a code made from several works: "Can journalism survive?" "An inside look at american newsroom" (Ryfe, 2012), "Rutinas productivas de un cibermedio nativo digital" (Iglesias Garcia, 2012), "Las nuevas reglas de la etnografía de la comunicación" (Soriano, 2011), "Making online news. The Ethnography of New Media Production" (Domingo, 2008) and "análisis de contenido y etnografía en el estudio de la producción de noticias" (Cervantes Barba, 1994). These works helped me to establish observable areas and to get on in the field with some skill, taking into account that I had never applied this technique of research before. Its advices and guidances helped me to make the face-to-face observation, for example, with a diary, where I wrote down

relevant information, with special discretion. This prudence was decisive for not conditioning behaviors or generate mistrust.

Let's see briefly, case by case, the details of the investigation, in view of the fact that the ethnography had to be adapted to the particularity of each magazine:

The face-to-face observation period in *Anfibia* went on for three weeks. Between 1st and 18th July 2014, I stayed in the work space from 9am, just when the first employee arrived, until 4pm, when the last one departed. Due to it was a small editorial office – the staff was integrated by eight people- that term of eighteen days was enough to get to know its functioning. During the interval that lasted the *in situ* analysis, I carried out the virtual follow-up: I could read the chain mails of the team and had access to *Google Analytics* as well as emails and old chats that I requested about the procedures of certain coverages. I also received materials that the editor in chief or the editors thought of my interest: past interactions with collaborators, agenda, visual politics, contract that authors sign and budget.

In the case of *Anfibia*, a project promoted by an academic institution and public funds, the observation was completed with a test, to study the student's perception, on the campus of the National University of San Martin. The action was carried out on July 4th, 11th and 18th, from 4.30pm to 7.30pm, at the entrance of the building: 150 students were asked if they knew the magazine and, if so, what was their opinion (ignorance was majority regardless of the profile - science or letters-, 89% failed to respond).

On the other hand, *Narratively* required three months of face-to-face observation. Why? Although I had a physical workspace available, the *staff* met only Monday afternoon, so, in order of being present at fourteen meetings I had to assist to those held between September 15th and December 15th 2014. Once again, we found a small group - the number of assistants did not exceed ten people on any occasion- so the time we shared was enough to discover the dynamics of their sessions and the proceedings of the participants. Additionally, during those three months I developed the virtual observation: I had access to the agenda that *Narratively* updates in *Google Drive* and to the private *Facebook* group which is used to keep connected with the team, collaborators and supporters of other media or universities. This *online* tracking added value to the analysis, which was

supplemented with specific *emails* from the editors, such as *Anfibia*, and two other elements: a style document and contracts signed by all the authors of the New York platform.

Also, *FronteraD* was a different case, with “headquarters” in the cloud and a single face-to-face meeting per month - called "writing table" - which takes place in a bar in Madrid. This led me to consider the observation for half a year, the equivalent to six meetings (January-June 2015). Two events supplemented these meetings: the presentation of an anthology edited on the occasion of the fifth anniversary, which took place on March 6th 2015 at the reader's home of the capital of Spain, and the meeting held three days later, at the *CaixaForum* in the same city, within a Cycle of Cinema and Journalism organized in March and April 2015. Concurrently, during those months, the magazine introduced my email address along with the rest of collaborators, so I received weekly sendings of the director and other sporadic ones with specific messages (urgent request for articles due to the absence of material in the "refrigerator", request for spreading of specific publications, etc.). Furthermore, I had access to the contracts signed by the authors of books and *ebooks*, and the plan of action on social networks.

The previous considerations warn how *cloud computing* helped balance periods of analysis: *FronteraD*, the magazine with less face-to-face work, required the most extensive online study (six months); and at the other end of the spectrum, *Anfibia* – which took the longest follow-up in person – lasted for three weeks of virtual study. However, it should be placed on record that the deep immersion in *Narratively* and *Anfibia* contributed a greater enrichment than in *FronteraD*, and that is made clear in the analysis. The absence of a physical editorial office in this project, in addition to the brevity of the personal meetings and the low human capital, encourage to do a more superficial analysis, in comparison with the power of the previous two magazines.

c) In-depth interviews

As the observation progressed, I outlined the interviews to understand the reasons of the practices and to obtain complementary explanations: why do not *Anfibia* have a style book at their disposal? Which mistakes led *FronteraD* to dispense with face-to-face workspace? Why does *Narratively* barely interact with the audience? Which is the cause of

the absence of multimedia resources in *FronteraD*? Which contents of *Narratively* are the most visited? What is the budget?, etc.

I adapted the issues to the magazine and to the task carried out by the survey respondents (therefore a core questionnaire is not submitted in annexes), and I never asked for anything I could check on my own observation. In this way, I omitted questions like: how are the meetings? How many times texts are edited? How is the atmosphere in the team? How is the production process? With regard to the salary, for example, I verified the version of the editors-in-chief with the contributor's ones.

Although the number of respondents fluctuated slightly depending on the magazine (between 15 people from *FronteraD* and 22 from *Anfibia*, which had more staff), the profile was the same: I talked to the team members, contributors (writers, photographers and illustrators) and management or business leadership. In other words, I talked to the managers of all the areas to be able to reach a wide point of view. Except for isolated occasions that I used *Skype* or *FaceTime*, I carried out face-to-face interviews in search for a more empathic and effective communication. This closeness was decisive at the time of accessing to *Google Analytics* or getting financial data (fields difficult to access, shielded a priori).

The methodology, considered as a versatile tool capable of responding to the singularities of each magazine, provided a vast and valuable material on which this thesis is based. The intersection of the data obtained in the descriptive analysis of the websites, in the observation and in the in-depth interviews granted a cross-sectional and panoramic view of the organizations. The results are put into groups according to the theme, rather than the method, to give coherence to the study and facilitate its comprehension.

The monograph is divided into two parts: "Informative overview in the digital ecosystem. An approach from the literary journalism" and "Case studies":

The first one is made of two chapters: "Slow journalism in opposition to emergency information" and "Notes on literary journalism in Latin America, United States and Spain". It is about an introductory section, with an approximate purpose, that provides the framework on which further investigation of *Anfibia*, *Narratively* and *FronteraD* are set.

On the one hand, it describes the panorama of digital media that, unrelated to the breaking news, they fight against the speed of the internet world with calm rhythms of research and writing. On the other hand, it distinguishes the tradition that belongs to every magazine and synthesizes common traits of literary journalism (the proposal collects traditional characteristics and suggests a series of digital attributes to adapt the content to the continent). Thus, case studies are exposed knowing (a) the nature of its journalistic activities and (b) basic notes of the trend of which they are part.

The second part is divided into three chapters, one for every publication, according to the chronological order of the field work: "*Anfibia*, symbiosis between journalists and academics", "*Narratively*, human stories told with audacity" and "*FronteraD*, a weekly digital publication to stimulate the intelligence". Their titles allude to the motto of the magazines and bear the weight of the thesis: here is where you enter to the heart of the study, to respond to the objectives of the research.

In contrast to the first part, where approaching the nature of literary journalism forced me to overcome the challenge, as I had just landed from public relations discipline, in the analysis of the cases - with a more practical approach - I felt like a fish in the water.

The three initiatives have five sections of identical nature, from the general to the specific to facilitate the understanding (the names and the number of sub-sections are adapted to each project). The first sub-section includes origins, start-up and the DNA of the initiatives, which allows you to know the essential spirit, the motivations of the founders and the launch method. With the perspective that gives the review of the history, the second one focuses on infrastructure, key to understanding the processes of production: staff, editorial office (if it exists), journalistic offer and web site.

On these foundations, the third one explains productive routines, from the setting of the agenda until the publication of the topics, with special emphasis on the work of editors through the analysis of a representative case. This exemplifies how corporate philosophy changes in practice. The fourth one refers to the promotion phase and it connects with the audience: target group, virtual community and outreach (web traffic). Finally, due to the good journalism requires economic investment, it is concluded with a

fifth section for the business model: the sources of income and expenses show how financial situation affects journalistic practices.

When dealing with an issue in constant transformation, I delimited the study to the period since the birth of each magazine until June 2015, when I started the writing final phase. Regardless of the time that lasted the observation, in-depth interviews were useful to reconstruct the trajectory; and the follow-up through the web pages, social networks and via email with the headmasters, until the beginning of 2016, allowed me to include developments taken place after the field work (for example, paper copies of *Anfibio* and *Narratively* or the change of headquarters of the face-to-face meetings of *FronteraD*).

CONCLUSIONS

The research results are presented in two parts. First of all, it is concluded case-by-case, to confirm or refute the hypotheses individually. In a second part, the general conclusions are enumerated.

a) Partial conclusions

Anfibio:

1. *Anfibio* magazine is a school of reporters and writers. The alliance of Chilean journalist Cristian Alarcón with the National University of San Martín gives a formative spirit that permeates journalistic routines. Although the essays written individually by professors and scholars, the chronicles are result of a editing process extended for months. The editors work constantly in monitoring, which is a masterclass for young writers. This approach contradicts the first hypothesis, because this supposition says that the goals of the websites analyzed in this research, is to beat the brief information of cyberspace. Even though the editorial policy contributes to this, it is not the main motivation of the Argentine project.

2. *Anfibio*'s inspiration in Latin American literary journalism best models, like *Gatopardo*, *Etiqueta Negra* or *El Malpensante*, has made it one of the most important non fiction magazines in Spanish language, because it has brought together a team of editors who work online as the reference paper publications do. This influence has led it to repeat the writing models of the conventional publications, so the second hypothesis is true: the multimedia language is a minority.

3. The merge between journalists and academics is a way to achieve attractive publications from the narrative point of view and heavy going in terms of conceptualization. This "*anfibio*" finds a balance between two seemingly distant areas, such as academic and professional world: the chroniclers work with biologists, philosophers, mathematicians, physicists, political scientists or anthropologists in building collective stories. However, although it is a collective production, it is not a four-hand writing: journalists assume the narrative part, while specialists oversee the conceptual rigour.

4. Virtual work, or cloud computing, plays a crucial role in *Anfibio*: the magazine is based on collaborations and the staff keeps in contact with the authors without geographical ties. Even so, digital possibilities are not incompatible with face-to-face meetings. This magazine has a physical newsroom where the staff meets daily to give order and meaning to the virtual work. This mixed formula favors the internal organization and daily operations of the team.

5. The financial support from The National University of San Martin, which provides 230,000 euros per year, results in two issues: (a) the logic absence of a business strategy, due to the support of public funds and (b) the professionalization of the model, because it is granted the staff and collaborators salary and also the logistic costs. However, the budget only allows tight remunerations and freelance authors cannot live of literary journalism.

Narratively:

1. The American magazine defines the identity and philosophy of the publication with a clear business vision. Therefore it is not fulfilled the first hypothesis: its foundation was carried out with advanced business knowledges. Far from improvisations, *Narratively* was born in New York's Tow-Knight Center for Entrepreneurial Journalism, a center of The Public University of New York to help foster sustainable business models for quality journalism. This is facilitated by the undeniable force of literary journalism in the United States, which consolidation for more than 50 years focused discussions on how to make profitable models.

2. The project led by the American journalist Noah Rosenberg has a strong digital mindset, which is expressed in the desire to use different formats. The editors seek to adapt the plasticity of literary journalism to the versatility of multimedia language through videos, podcasts and animated illustrations, among other elements. Despite this, the time and money this proposal needs do complicate, in practice, the diversification of formats. While it would not be accurate to speak of “analogue product” in the web, as stated in the second hypothesis, *Narratively* reproduces conventional writing guidelines, which makes difficult using all the narrative potential of the digital environment.

3. The *Narratively* everyday life is marked by a virtual work, which is organized by the headmaster and editors in a face-to-face meeting every Monday. This is so, because the structure is based on external collaborations, as in *Anfibia* and *FronteraD*. However, while digital operations are common in the three media analyzed, the New York project takes advantage of digital opportunities: besides of email and chats, for example, it uses other applications as *Google Docs*, for the calendar, a private group of *Facebook*, *Skype* or *FaceTime*.

4. *Narratively* moves to the cyberspace the meticulous editing of the american magazines, which models inspired literary journalism in worldwide: *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic* and *Esquire*, among others. Proof of this is the configuration of the staff, where, besides the associate editor, we can find the figure of the copy-editor, who oversees the articles already examined to verify the informaton and ensure literary quality. Some of these professionals use the recipe of Sarah Harrison Smith, exheadmaster of fact-checking section of *The New York Times*, collected in the book “The Fact Checker’s Bible” (2004).

5. The contents are not sufficient to finance the budget of *Narratively*, which has found a parallel business way, *Narratively Creative Group*, providing communication services to companies, institutions and non-profit associations. The magazine shows the narrative potential of the brand and attracts customers to the group, while trying to monetize journalism. This formula contradicts the economic precariousness foretold in the third hypothesis. However, as in *Anfibia*, retribution is so tight that freelance journalists and photographers can not live off literary journalism. Authors earn 250 euros on average per piece, and that may require a full-time work during a month.

FronteraD:

1. *FronteraD* Spanish magazine, unlike the previous two, totally meet the first hypothesis. On the one hand, it arises from the concern of the journalist Alfonso Armada and some colleagues by the immediacy and superficiality of the Internet. On the other hand, this magazine was founded without entrepreneurial or marketing knowledge, which has hindered the initiative since its inception. This journalistic-literary prototype has not been enough to achieve a sustainable business model.

2. The foundation of *FronteraD* marked a turning point in Spain, because it proposed a publication of literary quality journalism which went beyond the genres of opinion, taken *The New Yorker* as an example. Although the publication of chronicles and profiles has taken place throughout history, there are not so important cases as the emblematic models in The United States and Latin America. This explains that the inspiration of *FronteraD* is in the American continent. Numerous start-ups emerged in Spain since its creation in 2009, with a similar spirit (annex two). The new Spanish models reflect a phenomenon experienced in Latin America in the late 20th century and early 21st, when some projects began to imitate the best models of Anglo-Saxon literary journalism.

3. The analog patterns that *FronteraD* reproduces on its website confirm the second hypothesis. In this case, it is possible to talk about “analogue product” in the web: (a) the five weekly publications are published at the same time, as well as it would be a traditional weekly magazine; and (b) the presence of multimedia resources is testimonial, because there is no human capital for its development.

4. *FronteraD* doesn't monetize his editorial proposal of literary journalism because it has not found a business model, as provided in the third hypothesis. This aspect seriously constrains the project. The magazine comes out thanks to the authors voluntarism and a versatile director who assumes administration works, human resources, promotion, marketing and editing. Unlike *Anfibia* and *Narratively*, the Spanish project can not pay anything to the authors.

5. The new Spanish digital media have a comradeship that doesn't exist in the large media groups. Far from disputes or individualisms, they work often together in pursuit of survival. *FronteraD* earned 3,000 euros with *FIVE2*, a magazine published in 2013 with other four emerging models: *Alternativas Económicas*, *Periodismo Humano*, *Materia* and *Jot Down Magazine* (the audience multiplied his number, because there were more virtual communities). The same happened in 2014 with a commemorative copy of *Heraldo de Madrid*, although in this case ten projects gathered and *FronteraD* earned 4,000 euros. In spite the synergies, the model needs a radical change, which implies a professional marketing and social media strategy. If it does not happen, it will not probably be able to survive.

b) General conclusions

1. Literary journalism goes through a boom, thanks to the internet, in the three analysed spheres: United States, Latin America and Spain experience a revitalization of this discursive model with initiatives (annex two) that take advantage of the low entry barriers to the internet. In Spanish territory, it exists another novelty that exceeds the rise of magazines of literary journalism: since the creation of *FronteraD* (2009), Spain has experienced a spring of narrative genres which are more common in Latin American and Anglo-Saxon tradition: chronics, profiles, etc. It has been promoted too by other media as *Periodismo Humano* (2010), *Jot Down* (2011), *El Estado Mental* (2011), *Números Rojos* (2011), *Materia* (2012), *Naukas* (2012), *Fiat Lux* (2013), *Alternativas Económicas* (2013), *Altaïr Magazine* (2014), *Negratinta* (2014), *Revista 5W* (2015) and *Ctxt. Contexto y acción* (2015), among other emerging publications.

2. *Anfibia*, *Narratively* and *FronteraD* assume that users want to read long articles if the content provides added value and is very well written, when there is not a scientific

basis and/or a statistic to prove it. Statistics of the magazines reveal that users never stay more than two minutes (per session) in the websites. This time is not enough to consume all the information published. So, in future studies, it will be necessary to analyze the actual acceptance of longform journalism. Media need to adapt its products according to the needs and demands of the audience. If not, it will be very difficult to survive.

3. The analyzed models face the challenge of adapting their content to smartphones. The preponderance of these mechanisms makes indispensable rethink how to write, distribute and read. This goes beyond the concept of “responsive design”. As computers demand a specific version, far from cloning paper editions, the mobile has its own rules. While big newspapers implant the motto “mobile-first”, literary journalistic projects are still in a preliminary phase: taking advantage of the multimedia potential, as we saw in the partial conclusions. For this reason, and due to the unstoppable rise of the smartphone in the actual world, the newsrooms have to think about its spreading through the phones. And the connection with the audience depends on this.

4. The headmasters of the magazines studied are, in themselves, journalists-brand: Alfonso Armada (*FronteraD*), Cristian Alarcón (*Anfibio*) and Noah Rosenberg (*Narrativey*) are the flagships of their respective projects. To such an extent that the continuity of the initiatives is thanks to them. All of the headmasters were essential components in the foundation of the magazines and in the development: they attract advertisers, sponsors and professionals who, otherwise, would not be linked with their magazines. It is necessary to build a strong journalistic brand, otherwise, the projects will more easily disappear in a change of stage.

5. Literary journalism magazines are luxury and secondary products: they struggle to become profitable business models, but they still do not reach it. Journalists, photographers and illustrators have to pay the receipts to survive (home, water, electricity, food, etc.). For this reason, the majority of authors have other jobs with economic stability, inside or outside the newspaper industry. So, professionals see literary journalism as a hobby to develop their vocation, accumulate experience and, when it is possible, earn some of money. Meanwhile, the case studies attempt to reverse the situation by diversifying the income: book publishing, sponsorships, advertising, organizing events, training activities,

campaigns of crowdfunding and donations. Besides, we must add two other options that are beyond the cases studied, successfully operating in the United States:

- a) Funding of Hollywood producers. There are agencies (William Morris Endeavor, in the case of *Narratively*) that invest in some stories that can be adapted to the film or television industry. “Argo” is an example, which was born from an article of Joshuah Bearman in Wired (2007): “How the CIA Used a Fake Sci-Fi Flick to Rescue Americans From Tehran”.
- b) The “philanthropic journalism”. It consists in attracting willing tycoons to finance journalistic projects with a spirit of social service. For example, Christopher Buck (*Retro Report*) or Jeff Bezos (*The Washington Post*). Within this category would not be *Anfibia*, because its economic dependence on the State could mean the end of the magazine if there is a change of government (this is its main weakness).

Scan
to discover !



www.jmalbalad.com
Download this free Unitag App to scan
at unitag.io/app