11 Diversity and inclusion

"Difference matters"

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Journalism has long reported on diversity before it understood it as a mandate. In the 1990s, the concept came to Europe from the United States and was only increasingly discussed in relation to journalism from the second half of the 2000s. Now it is a key issue in the debate about the democratic responsibility of journalism and its sustainability (Kaltenbrunner et al. 2021). In the Journalism Innovations in Democratic Societies (JoIn-DemoS) project, the pairing of "diversity and inclusion" was identified as one of the 20 most relevant innovations in journalism in all five countries between 2010 and 2020 (Meier et al. 2022). At the same time, promoting innovations in journalism in general can positively influence various aspects of diversity and inclusion and thus a democratic society's audience (Saner and Wyss 2023), and promoting diversity is essential, as stereotypes still dominate the communications industry (Gislerprotokoll 2023). International, digital native media start-ups and entrepreneurial journalism initiatives, and increasingly legacy media, help disseminate and establish diversity and inclusion aspects and thus make an important contribution to democratic media societies.

There are many dimensions to the diversity discussion, which makes it difficult to give a universal definition. The *Inclusive Journalism Handbook* (Rupar and Zhang 2022) refers to religion, ethnicity, race, geography, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, age, disability, and social status as the main diversity dimensions. Important theoretical inputs in the discussion came early on from the concepts of intercultural media integration (Geißler and Pöttker 2009) or critical whiteness research (Bayer 2013; Wischermann and Thomas 2008). Summarizing, diversity and inclusion in journalism mean that in line with the normative task, the heterogeneity of a society should be represented in an appreciative way on the levels of newsrooms and media management, as well as in reporting. This is based on the "strong belief that difference matters and should be celebrated as a social good" (Rupar and Zhang 2022, 5). The two terms belong together but have disparate meanings. Whereas diversity refers to the acknowledgment of the existence of a wide range of human differences, inclusion concerns the corresponding commitment to change exclusive policies and structures (Breimer 2020). The concept increasingly influences journalism production routines. The awareness of the

need for editorial diversity and inclusion has grown in recent years (Lugschitz and Kaltenbrunner 2022). However, there is still a lack of implementation of diversity strategies, as shown, for example, in the international study on race and leadership by Nielsen et al. (2020). Other sectors are trying to establish corresponding strategies with "Charters of Diversity," which are committed to diversity management in business (Charta der Vielfalt e. V. 2023).

In our JoIn-DemoS case study sample, the question of who produces journalism content, especially the degree of diversity on a mesolevel within editorial teams concerning gender, ethnicity,[1] and sexual orientation, moved to the center. The consulted experts in the initial project phase (see Chapter 2 on methodology) who mentioned diversity and inclusion as one of the most important innovation areas in journalism mainly referred to this focus and considered diverse newsrooms as a prerequisite for a more balanced and realistic representation of society. To a lesser extent, the experts panel also considered the question of diversity at the management level to be relevant.

In the data evaluation, the innovation was given special weight due to its socio-political claim to represent the entire population. The results of our cross-country online survey with about 200 participants from all innovation case studies ($n = 100$) supported the assumption of the relevance of diversity and inclusion in the daily newsroom routine. Respondents considered diversity to be an important quality criterion in the design and implementation of their respective innovations (score 3.34 on a 1–5 Likert scale). Female respondents did assign a higher importance to the quality feature diversity than their male counterparts. This was not surprising given that equal rights for women are still being demanded in journalism. Dietrich-Gsenger and Seethaler (2019) show that in the DACH region comprising Germany (D), Austria (A), and Switzerland (CH), on average, only four out of ten journalists were female and were overrepresented in departments that tend to be lower ranked in the editorial hierarchy. On the other hand, women are underrepresented in management. In Austria, for example, two-thirds of journalists in leading positions are men (Kaltenbrunner et al. 2021).

Case studies

Due to the diversity focus of the expert panel mentioned earlier, our selected case studies mainly focused on editorial diversity aspects on a mesolevel. In the five countries, the following innovative initiatives were examined in detail:

- Austria: The *Biber Academy* has been part of the Viennese magazine *Biber* since 2012. The magazine employs, almost exclusively, journalists with a migration history. Every year, the academy offers 12 scholarships, especially for young journalists with a migration background, which include mentoring, workshops, and practice for entering journalism in

order to subsequently make newsrooms in traditional media more diverse. The interviewed experts are Amar Rajkovic, director of the *Biber Academy* and deputy editor in chief, and Simon Kravagna, founder and publisher.

- Germany: *Auf Klo* is a digital native founded in 2016 in cooperation with *Funk*, the online content network of the public broadcasters *ARD* and *ZDF*, to raise awareness of feminist issues and cover a variety of topics for teenage girls. Queer feminist and diverse topics are depicted, and the program was designed to be inclusive. *Auf Klo* is the first successful example of an editorial with queer feminist topics. Interviews were conducted with Anna Neifer, team lead story, as well as with Annika Prigge, editorial manager.

- Spain: *Pikara Magazine* is an entrepreneurial project with an intersectional feminist perspective. Established in November 2010 by the Basque network of journalists, *Pikara Magazine* is committed to covering multiple dimensions of diversity, as well as economic issues like care work. Even though, in recent years, media in Spain have taken steps in favor of feminism and LGTBQI+ equality, no other media has such a clear proposal as *Pikara Magazine*. The interview was conducted with Andrea Momoitio, coordinator of the magazine.

- Switzerland: *Chance 50:50*, a project originally launched by the *BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation)*, primarily revolves around ensuring that women are better represented in reporting. The idea is that editorial teams participate voluntarily in the project. Since 2019, the Swiss German Public Broadcast station *SRF* has been part of this international initiative. Around three dozen editorial teams at *SRF* are currently involved. The interview was conducted with the project manager of *Chance 50:50*.[2]

- United Kingdom: *Black Ballad*, a digital native which began as a free blog site in 2014, fights against how poorly black women writers, their stories, and experiences are represented across women's media. They give black women space and support their journalistic talent while also delivering content and articles addressed to black women. *Black Ballad* was frequently mentioned by experts during the innovation inventory, and it owns a newsroom that can serve as a beacon for diversity. The interviewed expert is Jeni Benson, head of editorial.

Our sample shows that diversity became an issue for both established media houses and new journalistic players during the last decade. The content focus of the examined diversity and inclusion initiatives lies on gender aspects in various forms, like addressing a (queer-)feminist or female teenage audience, and ethnicity, such as inclusion in the newsroom and reporting of (black) women and young people with migration histories. Other diversity aspects, such as sexual identity and orientation or disabilities, are considered but are mostly not at the core of interest.

Aims of the innovation

To understand the strategic goals of the five editorial boards, one must recognize the needs giving rise to the projects in the individual countries. In all these case studies, even though their organizational backgrounds differ, the interviewees stated that the projects came about because they observed a lack of representation across groups of people within newsrooms and wanted to fill this gap. Therefore, these innovations are mostly a reaction to the deficient reporting by legacy media as, for example, in the German case:

> [T]here was little to no education for a younger target group at the time on topics such as sexuality, orientation, changes in the body, but also gender orientation and everything that took place in these areas. That just wasn't mapped out at the time. These were things that you might still (not even) talk to your best friend about.
>
> (Prigge, *Auf Klo*, Germany)

In comparing these cases across countries, two types of goals can be identified. First, there are those that aim at users, and second, those that focus more on the development of the production side.

Targets in terms of users were given by all the case studies of the DACH region. *Biber* (AT), for example, emphasized that a more diverse editorial team enabled the magazine to publish stories that no one would. By offering journalists with a migration history a springboard into journalism, *Biber* aims to help make the Austrian media landscape more diverse. Kravagna pointed out that "it makes a difference: who does journalism and what skills do I bring to it? Or even what experience?" *Biber* viewed migration history as an expertise that allows research of topics where others have limited access and knowledge. For *Auf Klo* (DE), Neifer confirmed that the goal was initially to depict various taboo topics, whereas a few years later, "it's more a matter of looking at how these taboos are lived out, so to say of going beyond this expression and rather showing what realities of life they have become." Likewise, in the context of *Auf Klo*'s editorial team, the goal is not only to be diverse but also to represent marginalized groups within the content and thus create a safe space for young users. *Chance 50:50* confirmed they wanted to specify their target group and address women.

The second type of goals are those aiming at the development of the media company. Here, the idea in all countries was to adjust the lineup and staffing of the editorial offices so that they were diverse. After establishing more diversity in both the editorial team and publication output, there is a third component of making the editorial structure varied – i.e., processes and schedules must be compatible for a diverse team.

The basic objective behind diversifying newsrooms is the same in all cases: the hope for a greater plurality of opinions, backgrounds, and prior knowledge in order to generate new perspectives on a wide range of topics.

Supportive conditions

There are various circumstances that promoted the development of innovative initiatives. One of the most important aspects that helped the projects in the DACH region was clearly the social *zeitgeist*. The Austrian expert Rajkovic stressed that the social relevance led to the project being implemented in this way and that everyone was convinced that it was the right thing to do. Neifer from Germany emphasized that awareness in society has become stronger in recent years, and it was to *Auf Klo's* benefit that they already represented this sensitization in their program: "That's exactly the core of our format and therefore a reason for *Funk* to keep us in the portfolio." They would represent the modern thinking of editorial work and work with protagonists, the notion of "creating space and visibility for different people." The Swiss expert also stated that the demand for more representation of women did not come "from the moon" but was also part of social change and movement in Switzerland that also influenced the media market.

Likewise, the Spanish expert states that the emergence of feminist journalism was a facilitating moment for her company: "At a time when journalistic reporting performance is increasingly criticized in public, it is essential to remember that balance is a characteristic of quality journalism. You cannot institutionalize diversity in a sustainable way without actually institutionalizing a diverse team", stated Momoitio. One approach to implement this was the regular exchange of volunteers or interns, which gave *Pikara* the impetus to diversify. The aspect researchers have observed in Germany in election years is that a socially important issue such as diversity is more prominent in influencing voter favorability. Moreover, the feminist movement is seen as a cyclical phenomenon in that only once every few years is there a significant step forward socially.

Another facilitating factor in several countries was the availability of money and a suitable infrastructure. Momoitio (SP) argued that geographical location played a role in funding, such as in the Basque Country, where initiatives are promoted more than in other parts of Spain.

In Austria, both interviewees pointed out that funding was intrinsically important for *Biber*, and in the United Kingdom, the argument for *Black Ballad* was quite similar, as money enabled *Black Ballad* to recruit new staff or increase part-time positions to full time.

However, in *Chance 50:50* (CH), the management granted strong moral support to the editorial team, but did not, to date, offer any financial support. Some interviewees mentioned supportive circumstances that were related to the given goals of the company or the editorial office – for example, *Auf Klo*. Both interviewees stated independently of each other that the goal of specific target group topics could be easily achieved because the *Auf Klo* team was, at the time of being established, already diverse. An important note is that small, independent media viewed funding as a beneficial tool, whereas those that had patronage in large media companies did not.

Obstructive conditions

Our case studies can be considered pioneers in the development of diverse newsrooms, although there have also been factors that have held back and hindered their initiatives. Though funding was not a problem for some case studies, they did experience financial bottlenecks. Due to the funding of public broadcasting in Germany, *Auf Klo* has received official public funding, but according to one expert, it could have achieved more and fulfilled its educational mission to a greater extent if there had been a sufficient budget. In Spain, for *Pikara*, Momoitio was critical that although the project was not very costly, in the long run, money would always be a problem. Momoitio said, "[I]f each one of us had time to think about innovating and not paying the bills we would be competing with *El País*. But we don't have the money." The Swiss expert from *Chance 50:50* confirms that a lack of monetary resources also played a role in the development. Cost-cutting measures and the resulting increased time pressure meant that the project did not run completely free of obstacles at *SFR*. The *Chance 50:50* team points out that

> there were a few editorial departments that are male-led and with big concerns [who argue that] the balance between men and women could be achieved at the expense of quality, or that only women would be sought because they are women, the old arguments.
>
> (Chance 50:50, Switzerland)

The *Black Ballad* (UK) case also shows parallels: Benson states that although the project was ultimately driven by funding, the digital native had a lot of problems accessing the funding in the first place.

Another topic that mainly concerned the project members in Germany and Austria was the reactions from society. In Austria, Rajkovic names the wave of refugees in 2015 as a break for the project. *Biber* recognized that society was no longer positively disposed toward migrant issues and that this created a kind of caesura in the immigrant discourse. In Germany, one expert states that a big problem was hate speech on the internet as it is an emotionally charged issue. For Neifer, it was clear that "some parts of society are already very far advanced in our opinion," while "other parts have expressed a very clear interest in not wanting such a development and the opening [up] of society to tolerance."

Societal impact

Since the commitment to diversity and inclusion is understood as a claim to better representation of society in the public sphere, it could be assumed that the interviewees would also attribute a strong social impact to their projects. Although the projects' goals are similar, the interviewees assessed them very differently.

The Austrian interviewees saw the greatest social impact in the awareness that journalists with a migration history who receive basic professional training at the *Biber Academy* are employed in other established media houses and thus strengthen diverse reporting there. The same applies to the *Chance 50:50* (CH) project, which wants to ensure that women are more strongly represented in the media and, above all, more visible in society. Both *Biber* and *Chance 50:50* pointed out that their projects help ensure that underrepresented groups regularly appear in the media and in public debates and that their point of view is included.

Prigge from *Auf Klo* (DE) also indicated a change in perspective. She said that it was important to let a variety of voices have their say to reflect multiple points of view. This also led to stimulating debates and discussions across groups of people and normalizes assorted models of life. This could lead to users being empowered and thus standing up for themselves. In Spain, *Pikara* professed to allow people to know and claim that not only did feminism matter but focused as well "on a more complex look that understands that there are places of privilege and that in reality most of us are elsewhere." In the United Kingdom, *Black Ballad* stated that through this culture of debate, matching the goals of the project, black population experiences would be affirmed. This also led to various groups of people coming into contact with each other and thus helped to suggest methods of further engagement where appropriate.

The three initiatives, which do not belong to big media houses, *Biber Academy, Pikara Magazine*, and the *Black Ballad*, see themselves as icebreakers that exert social pressure in the sense that larger media houses become aware of new topics and pay them more attention. The existence of *Pikara* has opened the doors to the reflection of much larger media with greater visibility. Today, there are more contact points or other formats that deal with diversity. According to our case studies, the topic of diversity and inclusion was also gaining a higher status within public broadcasting. Taboos that existed some years ago, where there was no public discussion about it, were broken and had already reached other parts of society. Now it is more a matter of looking at how these taboos are lived out – i.e., to go beyond this, showing what realities of life have become.

Conclusion

Diversity is a social development that finally made its way into journalism. The awareness that neglecting large segments of the population contradicts the fundamental journalistic task of representation is now present in large parts of international quality journalism.

The JoIn-DemoS project pointed to diversity in several respects: first, the notion of diversity and inclusion was considered one of the 20 most relevant innovations in journalism, particularly because of their social-political relevance. Overarchingly, it could be seen that the three case studies, Austria,

Spain, and the United Kingdom, which are independent of large media companies, received funding for their projects, which was a social necessity. Moreover, in the online survey, diversity and inclusion were also mentioned transnationally as important quality features of journalism.

In the analysis of our case studies, differences can be found between the sample countries in terms of prevailing diversity dimensions. In Austria, Germany, and the United Kingdom, the discussion has broadened from the inclusion of women in reporting and newsrooms to aspects of ethnicity, criticizing white, middle-class, heterosexual, and male-dominated journalism. In Spain and Switzerland, the debate is still mainly concerned with the proportion of women on editorial boards.

Unlike other innovations, such as fact-checking or media labs, which were also analyzed in the JoIn-DemoS project (see Chapters 22 and 23), diversity and inclusion are not departments or delimitable initiatives. To be successful, this innovation area must involve all levels of the company as shared commitments. To implement editorial diversity and inclusion, three components are necessary, according to the interviewees: (i) building an editorial team of individuals with various experiences and ages from a multitude of backgrounds, ethnicities, and disciplines; (ii) establish varied reporting by the team; and (iii) adapt the editorial structures and (application) processes, to the demands of the diverse editorial team. For a sustainable implementation, editorial boards can anchor diversity and inclusion in a written editorial quality management system, which regulates these three aspects in a binding manner and outlines their realization, drawing on existing Charters of Diversity in other sectors (Charta der Vielfalt e. V., 2023). In the media's quest for sustainability, diversity and inclusion also have a pragmatic economic side – for example, on the topic of expanded target group marketing or for better presentation of the external image.

Thus, diversity and inclusion will continue to occupy media companies and journalistic newsrooms in all five countries in the coming years and will both require and influence further development at the organizational and product levels. Early diversity efforts in the form of established editorial structures in legacy media or news start-ups are having an effect in that some societal taboos have diminished or vanished, and others have become the norm. Diversity engagement will continue to help break with old dynamics and traditional perspectives of journalism.

Notes

1 Drawing on Graf (2011, 121), the term "ethnicity" refers to an ethnic identity formation as the demarcation of a group that defines itself through shared cultural traditions that are perceived as different from those of other groups. The assumption, not the existence, of a difference is crucial here. As such, the concept includes people with a migration history, the dimension of race, and ethnic minorities.

2 The Swiss experts were assured of anonymity.

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