In Other News: Negotiating a Shifting Notion of Newsworthiness Through Amateur Web Video

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This paper attempts to open the discussion on the changing notion of news among Filipino broadcast audiences and the broadcast media gatekeepers through the use of user-generated content. Several versions of singular events are allowed to be told, thus subverting the news media's monopoly of the telling of events. This paper looks at some of the web videos that made the jump from sites like YouTube and Facebook, and assesses their newsworthiness according to those set by the mass media. Are audiences and producers influencing a change in the criteria of newsworthiness? Through a rhetorical analysis, this paper proposes a switch to the "little narratives" often regarded as novelty by corporate media, and argues for the quotidian that exist as story fragments; the private lives of individuals contribute to the conceptualization of news from the others' perspective.

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In the last few years, news programs on Philippine television have increasingly accommodated content produced by amateur videographers, driven in part by the improved usability of the World Wide Web, and nearly-instantaneous internet access. Since ABS-CBN's first jab at user-generated content through their *Boto Mo, Ipatrol Mo* campaign, GMA 7's *YouScoop*, and recently, TV 5's *JournalisMO*, free content from the web has practically become staple fare on primetime news programs. This content is churned out by the very people who once "only" watched the news. No longer just active audiences, individuals in this highly-connected era have taken things a step further by assuming the role of "produser": individuals who, according to Axel Bruns (2007), use existing information, appropriate, and likely re-use it. These people are considered amateurs (as opposed to the trained broadcast professional), generating and distributing their creations among their social networks—their own publics. Produsers are bringing content from the most mundane, marginalized and hidden/private spaces of life to virtual, as well as the commercially-constructed public sphere. Videos

such as "We Love You Ma. Venus Raj," the little girl bawling over the death scene on *Mara Clara*, were discussed at length locally and internationally. Uncanny images such as those of Lola Aurelia Matias, were only some of the content that went viral before being picked up by the national news media—not for any political, social or economic value, but for a heightened sense of human interest, and most tellingly, mood. The conversations online generated by these stories are the ones that news media are quick to pick up, spinning them into lengthier stories that are featured at the height of a news broadcast, or discussed in several episodes of the program.

The news media have embraced the forms, highlighted content, or created a discourse around ethical uses of amateur web video alongside the broadcast of user-generated content. With almost 96% of active internet users in the Philippines uploading and viewing web video online ("Power to the People," 2010), the definition of what is newsworthy seems to be shifting, a rhetorical eruption (Vitanza, 1997), that can go either way towards continued co-optation by big media or a radical redefinition of news/values that can (if not already) cause changes in the current structures and standards of commercial broadcast networks.

A number of things took place, and are likely to continue to take place here: first, incidents that occur on a very granular level are more likely to make the national news now, more than before. Captured on video with an amateur hand and consumer recording tools, there is a flood of visual and digital information flooding communication channels. Second, feeling and mood seem to be the drivers of this content, both online and in broadcast—the aural and visual dimension providing a spin on any textual expression, more people are more likely to connect with what they see and hear instantly. Third, it seems like the initial function of news as agenda setter is slowly transforming. Where news organizations were the ones who picked the issues or events to be discussed by the public, social networks now dictate what is interesting to the people who make up those networks. News organizations now diligently pick up on what people feel is important to them on an emotional level, and is perceived as a national event.

My conjecture is that the idea of news is undergoing a negotiation through the forms and types of content that are created by online produsers. Some may see this as an evolution of the mediascape, and a contribution to the media ecology bolstered by open access web platforms, mobile devices, free software and peer connections through social networks. (Jenkins, 2006) On the other hand, critics of the commercial media may consider this simply a new way for big media corporations to co-opt the creations of amateur videographers through their "free labor" (Terranova, 2000). Still others may consider this a deterioration of the quality of news reporting, and of

broadcast journalism in general (Champlin & Knoedler, 2002; Thussu, 2008; Ursell, 2001). These positions invite those of us in the academe to consider how different sectors in society may provide us with various approaches to studying media content. More importantly, it gives an indication that—to anyone and everyone with some stake in the function and perceived benefits of the media—no single group can claim a monopoly of the information and complete control of defining the agenda.

CONVERSATIONS IN THE MEDIA

When Tim Berners-Lee decreed free and open access to the code for the World Wide Web, this provided potentialities for the regular person to access, create and share content. The buzzword that emerged in the second wave of the Web's incarnation (otherwise known as Web 2.0) was user-generated content, or UGC. User-generated content is seen by some (Burgess & Green, 2009; Jenkins, 2006; Kellner, 2008) as a product of a growing participatory culture, mediated by digital platforms such as YouTube and Facebook. This affords participation from an audience previously constructed as primarily consumptive and passive. Audiences' participation is providing them with the critical awareness to identify marginalized issues that may not be sexy enough for television, but is vital to their immediate communities (Deuze, 2006; Sawhney, 2009; Tacchi, 2009). Most of all an air of power, ownership, and permission govern this participation, and is slowly giving way to a conversation between the people who construct the news, and those who live it.

It is a symbiotic relationship in many ways, the most telling of which is the fact that such content orients news organizations towards the concerns of smaller and more targeted audiences. At the same time it provides the public with the proverbial voice in the Habermasian conception of the public sphere. The concept of participation, takes on a sharper edge, as users themselves begin to define their own spheres, their own publics, and to an extent, their own rules and standards (Calhoun, 1992). The public sphere, according to Jurgen Habermas, exists through discourse and debate that occurs within and without physical, economic, and political structures. The embodiment of civic discourse in visual images produced through amateur videography is considered by some scholars to be a healthy extension of the public sphere (Allan, 2003; Benson, 2009; Bondebjerg, 1996; Hetrick, 2006).

This "interplay—and tension—between the top-down force of corporate convergence and bottom-up force of grassroots convergence"(Jenkins, 2007; p 175) is what Henry Jenkins sees "driving many of the changes we are observing in the media landscape" (p. 169). Convergence, in Jenkins's view,

is the phenomenon that allows the collective intelligence of audiences/produsers, fans, and online (or even offline) communities to engage with commercial mass media on their (the audience-produsers) own terms. Digital tools, the Internet, and Web 2.0 (the social web) has facilitated this ability for produsers to consume, create, communicate and collaborate (Canlas, 2010) with each other and with big media organizations online, contributing to existing ecologies of media content. This echoes Burgess and Green's (2009) claim that, "various forms of cultural, social, and economic values are collectively produced by users en masse, via their consumption, evaluation and entrepreneurial activities" (p. 5). These collectives define their spaces online, according to personal interests that may resonate with other individuals, hence forming more and more specific publics—publics that are composed of more than just the learned bourgeoisie that Habermas assumed the public sphere would always be peopled with, but publics with the capabilities of the agenda setters.

Grossberg, Wartella, and Whitney (1998) assert that the idea of a "public" in Habermas's concept of the public sphere, is in a constant state of flux, evolving with every new group of individuals who are enfranchised throughout history, with the tools that allow them to find new ways to use them media for their own needs and goals. At this point in media history, the current publics that have emerged have quickly developed their expertise in shooting photos and videos on their camera phone. Likewise, the speed with which mobile connectivity has grown, as well as the iterative improvements done on social network sites like Facebook and YouTube have all converged to give the average tech user a semblance of the creative and disseminative capability of a personal broadcast/webcast network. Finally, any individual is capable of capturing the contingent, which is accessible only through the personal interactions with the everyday. Technology has insinuated itself so surreptitiously and so easily that we can capture something as abstract as a mood. What is amazing (though not surprising) is the ability for individuals unrelated or unconnected to each other to find links through a simple understanding of what is being "said" and felt through the forms and content.

IN THE MOOD FOR NEWS

Since the early days of broadcast, programs have encouraged audiences to send in stories of their lives, which became inspirations for drama and advice-giving programs, especially on radio. In the Philippines, Fidela Magpayo's *Dear Tia Dely*, which had been airing since after the Japanese occupation of the Philippines (Enriquez, 2008), became a template for future incarnations of the melodrama. Television had Helen Vela's *Lovingly*

Yours, Helen and Eddie Ilarde's *Kahapon Lamang* (which also began as radio programs). Today's *Maalaala Mo Kaya*'s dramatization of audiences' life stories (Del Mundo, 2003), as well as other anthologized "true-to life" stories on television continue to capitalize on audience-participation, using the everdayness of struggle in lower-middle to upper-middle class lifestyles, reifying what Nicanor Tiongson (1983) identified as "*mabuti ang inaapi*" ("the good folks suffer") in his "Four (dis)values in Filipino drama." Though initially an assessment of Philippine cinema, I feel that the (dis)values apply to Philippine television as well, especially the values of "*maganda ang maputi*" ("the fair skinned are beautiful") and "*maganda pa ang daigdig*" ("there are still beauty in the world"), which all serve, on a much "closer" level (what with TV's ubiquity in the home and elsewhere) to underscore a mood of helplessness, and the primacy of the aspiration (to aspire for) project of Filipinos/Filipino audiences to approximate a Western lifestyle (one of which is the propensity to find honor in the punishment of attaining and maintaining it). This ground breaking perspective on the building blocks of constructed Filipino reality succeeds not only because it helps us identify the visual cues that help the narrative flow; more importantly, it helps the intended audiences identify with the stories. Dramas—or in ancient Greek thought, tragedies—were the ideal mediums for this.

Aristotle's Poetics, outlines the six parts of tragedy (plot, character, thought, language, spectacle and music) which aimed to recreate for audiences, on a more granular level, the tragic plots of known Greek myths. As part of the Greeks' discourse on ethics and to an extent their system of logic, "true" tragic plays, according to Aristotle, should inspire pity and fear among the audience for them to be able to suspend disbelief, and to associate with the fortunes/misfortunes of the characters, "pity is occasioned by undeserved misfortune, and fear by that of one like ourselves." (Aristotle, trans. 1974).

Aside from outlining the different ways a character is placed within the plot structure as an agent, Poetics recommended the placing of the audience within the states of mind of the characters as well, to achieve the optimum cathartic experience and instill in the audiences the messages of morality and living ethically under the protection of the Gods. Most of all, by way of hamartia, (or the character/hero's "fatal flaw" of over-reaching his class/status, skills, or level of knowledge), tragedies serve as a reminder of the fragility of humanity in the face of the omnipotent Olympians, who were thought to possess the wisdom of the world. Narratives of these tragedies were customarily kept in tact, to reiterate the morality and thinking designed to keep its citizens and the city in order. Poets were less than likely

to consider alternative characterizations and outcomes, lest they offended society and the powers-that-be with their revisions.

This mirrors the hegemonic hold of the mass media, not only in terms of setting the public agenda, but even in the way the "true" form of the story should exist in electronic and visual media. What is held up as aesthetically acceptable, fair, and real are based on the standards of the commercial industry that insists on the existence of a value-neutral view of reality. Ang (2006) writes:

> Politically, it enables television institutions to develop strategies to conquer the audience so as to reproduce their own (media institutions') mechanisms of survival; epistemologically, it manages to perform this function through its conceptualization of "television audience" as a distinct taxonomic collective, consisting of audience members with neatly describable and categorizable attributes. (p. 154)

Stabilizing this construction of audience allows the media to continue producing content and forms that provide efficient definitions of reality that are neatly packaged in half-hour programs, two minute news items, a 15-second sound bite. These templates have endured, looping conversations among those who have access to the airwaves, and those who wield the art of producing a news piece. The television audiences were defined as the consumers of the broadcasted information, and were hardly key players in the discourse. Interpellated by the hegemony of big media's agenda, audiences are conditioned to accept the information as authentic and any radical potential (Winston, 1998) that attempts to displace the commonplace discourses, or to challenge the forms of storytelling, was either suppressed or co-opted.

Poets, or members of the Greek audience, who attempted to challenge these commonplace notions were either ridiculed by the "nobility" or branded heretics by the ultra-religious. Still, there were those who tried, succeeded and were ostracized. The poet Euripides, who began writing and competing in Athenian dramatic festivals in 455 BC, one of his trademarks being deviations from the pre-determined plots of mythical stories. Toying not only with the content of the narratives (women as key agents in the stories, such as Phaedra and Medea; challenging the decrees of the gods), but with the form as well, "disregarding" the accepted and established genres practiced by his predecessors Aeschylus and Sophocles (Dunn, 1996). In his plays, Euripedes made extensive use of "red herrings" or baits

to suspend audience disbelief, subplots and the deus ex machine—albeit in ways that showed how distant and disconnected the gods actually were from the daily lives and struggles of the humans (Welch, 2011; McDermott, 1991; Arnott, 1978). Lush 2008) adds further that "Euripedes in this way highlights the conventionality…and 'teases the audience' by manipulating their expectations…" (p. 14). By introducing unconventional ways of treating the stories, and the unconventional uses of the story devices, Euripedes provided some space for the uncanny—that is, fragments of narrative that were actual occurrences in the lives of the people who actually lived them. The advancing realization of the existence of situations such as vengeful women and rebellious thought against the gods allowed the hegemonic grand narratives of Olympus to recede in prominence, and for the audiences—the citizens—to relate with their own struggles.

These attempts to change the grand storylines of Greek mythology are reflective of the sub-stories that get told by produsers of web video. In any telling of an all-encompassing mythos that functions as the logic of a society, there are always other tales that are subsumed and/or subjugated. This calls to mind Nicanor Tiongson's (n.d.) proposition about the little narratives that exist in indigenous Filipino theatrical forms. According to Tiongson, these are

> ...significant because they are organically linked with the people's lives. For one, they feature the material culture of the tribe, even as they mirror the activities of the tribe as well as the flora and fauna that surround and impinge on the life of the tribe. (p. 13)

It is in the familiar, organic everydayness that uncanniness reveals itself, and what significant feelings it evokes.

This "uncanniness" is what we may align with what is, according to Jean-Francois Lyotard (1994), the "sublime feeling."

> In sublime feeling, nature no longer 'speaks' to thought in the 'coded writing' of its forms. Above and beyond the formal qualities that induced the quality of taste, thinking grasped by the sublime feeling is faced, 'in' nature, with quantities capable only of suggesting a magnitude or force that exceeds its power of presentation. (p. 6-7).

The sublime feeling, or the uncanny (Freud, 1919), is beyond compartmentalized, categorized thought. In the Platonic tradition of

reasoning, where all knowledge is knowable and every question has a predetermined answer, all possibilities have an algorithmic equivalent. Lyotard (1994) considers the uncanny the welcome glitch in sweeping constructions of the "what is" that aims to nail down explanations and categorize phenomenon in neat little compartments. The grand narratives are contrasted with the little narratives, and the little narratives possess the discarded possibilities that could not fit into the boxes that would define phenomenon as "fact." In short, when we face the unexpected, we come face to face with the Other, the undefinable concepts negated in favor of those that fit into the constructions Plato saw as ideal and non-contradictory. In the multiple *aporias* of everyday life, where routine and familiarity are predispositions, the sublime feeling/uncanny housed in the little narratives of exigency is seen by Lyotard as the key to potentialities around rhetorical situations. Being attuned to the demands of a key, unexpected moment in the midst of the familiar—a habit, an oft-visited place, calendared activities—opens one up to the possibility of multiple perspectives that may not have been evident in the face of the usual or expected.

The idea of uncanniness works in both the "traditional" sense of the news, and in the post-modern musings on objectivity in mediated reality. As the broadcast media enterprise applies its processes of filtering, vetting, and framing to make sense of events for its audience, the (former) audiences immerse themselves in the event and create their audiences who try to make sense of these events for themselves. In the telling of their stories in their own way, and in their own time, produsers are seem to be aligning themselves with the "drama of the everyday" that the news uses as a frame, but with subtle shifts in the storytelling that only they are able to perceive, simply because they live it.

Jump Cuts

In many of the user-generated videos featured in the news, one often finds the scenes filmed in private spaces of the home. The video of the four friends watching the Miss Universe pageant is a striking example of how ordinariness suddenly becomes a national concern (Lexlib, 2010). Their heartfelt cheer was the pivotal moment, the deciding factor in the motives of viewers to pass on the video link and talk about it, so much so that news organizations just had to feature the clip on their newscast. The scene is one that happens adjacent to the bigger event that is the Miss Universe pageant, but definitely not one that would merit national coverage.

Though the intellectual/cultural/social struggles that continue to rumble beneath the glamorous trappings of the pageant present issues that would be considered relevant in the frame of newsworthiness, four males in

pajamas watching the live telecast of the Miss Universe pageant from inside a pink bedroom seemed to say more about how the general public felt about the existence and continued implementation of the pageant. Despite the grand narratives that formed out of discussions about the objectification of women, the excess and expense in mounting the local version of the pageant, and the Westernized taste for spectacle, it looks like the regular *Pinoy* (slang for Filipino) still enjoys watching such events on television, *inaabangan* (anticipated), in fact. This isn't meant to criticize the quality of the chosen forms of entertainment of the regular Filipino viewer, but it is an inquiry into who is watching, their motivations to continue watching, and for the web surfer to continue watching the average *Pinoy* watching (and reacting to the results of) the pageant.

Many amateur videos have been used as eyewitness accounts in extraordinary events. The grainy and shaky video captured during unexpected moments underscore the immediacy of the event, and more importantly, its authenticity. Video of catastrophes (storms from Milenyo [international name Xangsane in 2006] to Pablo [international name Bopha in 2012] to earthquakes to floods, and more) are snatched up by news programs in an effort to provide reports on the status of a certain location during natural disasters. And though these are legitimate story items that are of national concern, the apparent fetishized looping of "eyewitness" devastation scenes, raw panic sounds and jolting camera movements has a mesmerizing hold on viewers, knowing that the person shooting the amateur video could have been them. In 2011, a shooting at a shopping mall in Pampanga was caught on video. The lives of two teenagers involved in a lover's quarrel ended tragically when the first one shot the other in the head, and then turned the gun on himself. The incident was, according to the suicide note, of a deeply "personal nature" ("2 boys in SM Pampanga mall shooting die," 2011). However, for those at the mall, and those with their camera phones at the ready, this was a familiar situation that they could have found themselves or others they know in: as frequent visitors to the same mall, or couples having a fight. Having the means to capture the incident, and being present in the midst of an extremely common time and place, where knowledge and experience converge to identify the extraordinary allowed the emergence of this controversial amateur video. This worked inadvertently in favor of a news production because people on the ground were quick on the draw when a tv camera crew could not be at the right place at the right time. It provided news programs with the proof that such an incident happened, while creating a sense of mystery by keeping the victims' identities secret, and airing only snippets of the grainy, shaky video because of its highly graphic nature.

The use of these amateur videos has continually inspired the "amateurish look" in shooting, even if done by a professional, to give the productions an authentic kick. This voyeuristic device has been used countless times in cinema and television series; but its use not just in dramatic programs, but in news features and documentaries has become a staple in trying to subtly persuade audiences of the immediacy and urgency of an event or argument. In an era when advanced recording equipment and high-count video resolution are hailed for their broadcast quality standards, it's ironic that news draws its authority from the "crudeness" of amateur production.

What was it about that split-second reaction, and the unexpected tears (of joy) that were shed as the program host announced Venus Raj as the fifteenth finalist in the competition? How does an individual decide to whip out a camera phone and start filming? When do they hit the stop button?

These moments may be considered *kairotic*, or the most opportune time for various occurrences to intersect, and most likely, produce meaning. Mostly indefinable yet pivotal, it almost always avoids definition. Kenneth Burke, in *A Grammar of Motives* (1969), sees the *kairotic* moment in the midst of a context, but never static in its placement within. According to Burke, "the synecdochic relation is between person and place" (p. 7), and establishes how the scene or environment, where acts are performed, informs the quality of act. The agents perform the acts, and these acts come into being based on how the scene is constructed. And in the pivotal moment of decision (or indecision), what are revealed are the motives of the agent as he reacts to the mood presented by the scene. Yet as the agent moves, so does the scene. It shifts and will likewise take on a different quality, as the agent starts to inscribe himself into the scene, thus creating a new space for possibility. And it continues, as the scene-agent ratio continues to play into each other. One of the fundamental assumptions here is that the nothing is fixed or certain, there are none of the usual characteristics that are meant to define the scene, despite its apparent familiarity. It is simply an expression of motive, which derives from the scene itself but places no pressure on its identification or categorization. In that, it becomes something strikingly unfamiliar, something uncanny.

In broadcast speak, *kairos* may be easily misconstrued as the "right now," "breaking news," and "this just in." The standards and practices of news gathering and reporting apprehend the uncanny in the sudden irruptions of events that shatter the veneer of "normalcy" and routineness of everyday living. As moments we hardly understand, reporters on the scene can provide little past preliminary reports or musings about the reasons for the occurrence, and the label, "breaking news" neatly inserts logic back into the messy occurrence, veiling the initial feeling of displacement. Still, says

Kari Anden-Papadopoulos (2011), "journalistic eye witnessing" by citizen journalists and amateur videographers challenge one of the most important aspects of journalism: the apparent monopoly on objectivity. Paraphrasing Lillie Chouliaraki, Papadopoulos claims that

> the subcontracting of the role of the eyewitness to private citizens can be seen to constitute a break not only with the monopoly of journalistic story-telling but also with professional discourses of objectivity: in replacing the journalist with the citizen as a guarantee of the authenticity of witnessing … it is no longer only the verification of facts and sources that makes for the trustworthiness of news but the authority of genuine emotion and first-person experience. (p. 5)

In many a feature headline story, news programs do in fact build on those initial feelings of unfamiliarity and emotion. The story of Aurelia Matias was itself an uncanny occurrence in the daily routine of one individual who was allegedly intrigued by what he witnessed: a very old lady in her house dress, sitting alone on a curbside along one of the major thoroughfares in the city. Now while this may not seem like something out of the ordinary to those living in the city, especially in densely populated areas where elder residents would seek out a spot to sit and escape their cramped indoors, Reddie J, a photographer, was struck by something different. Lola Aurelia had pinned letter-sized paper on her chest and back that had the photo of her missing husband, and contact information, along with a plea for help to locate him. Luis Matias had been missing for two weeks when Reddie J snapped the photo of Lola Aurelia and posted it on his Facebook wall and encouraged his network to share the message. The photo got passed around 50,000 times on Facebook alone within a day of posting. Reading some of the comments on the photo, people were "moved" and "felt for" Aurelia and her plight. Others said they "lifted a prayer" and "hoped they would find each other." This event created a buzz in the social media world online that news gatherers in the media organizations could not help ignore it.

One particular prime time news show leaped into action: 24 Oras devoted a combined 6 minutes of airtime through one main segment and a follow-up segment on this story, referencing both the photo taken and the reaction caused on social networks (Wbvut, 2011). The feature established the state of the Matias' life, Lolo Luis's condition and the emotional turmoil Lola Aurelia was going through in her worry and search for her husband, who was suffering from dementia. The emotion was heightened when Lola

Aurelia showed the moldy bread she kept by the doorway of their house, treating it as a talisman that would somehow lead her husband home. The story, narrated by Kara David, transitioned to the search, and presented the news reporter assisting their subject in the search, going as far south as Paranaque (from Quezon City) to check on a lead. This built the suspense as more leads came in through text messages, more site inspections yielded negative results, and finally to a plateau in the action as the wild goose chase was put on hold, and Lola Aurelia was returned to her "spot." The news item was introduced early in the newscast, but by the tail end of the program, what seemed to be breaking news was the update that the Matias couple was reunited, with Lolo Luis having been found under a footbridge at an LRT station.

Clearly banking on the emotional value of Lola Aurelia's story, *24 Oras* made a rhetorical move in positioning the piece strategically at the beginning of the broadcast. From the first "moving" photo published by Reddie J, the news item continued to build on the mood that emanated from the image of Lola Aurelia sitting on the curb. Consider that the opening scenes of the news story showed Lola Aurelia in the same attire, sitting on the pavement of a high-traffic area, effectively mimicking the captured moment—only this time, on video. Words were used to "deepen" the context of the story, build up the struggle, and to hook the 50,000 or so individuals who were said to be "involved" in the quest to locate Lolo Luis. The emergence of a temporary "community," surrounding this event served to link the media organization to its viewers through an emotional connection, and legitimizing its claim of relevance to a good number of people, its human interest value and proximity to the larger population.

The novelty of such content fits squarely into one of the news values identified as "human interest," or alternatively as "bizarreness," "sensation" or "unexpectedness" (Tuchman, 1978; Galtung & Ruge, 1978; Gans, 2005; Allen, n.d.). In fact, news organizations, whether consciously or unconsciously, know that "routinizing the unexpected" is a critical part of their news gathering and filtering process. Gaye Tuchman, in a paper published in the American Journal of Sociology in 1978 presents this as a logical solution to the exigencies of human life:

> That workers impose routines upon their work poses a problem concerning specialized unexpected events: how can an organization routinize the processing of unexpected events? Specifically, how do newsmen routinize the handling of a variety of unexpected events in order to process and to present accounts and explanations of them? For, without

> some routine method of coping with unexpected events, news organizations, as rational enterprises, would flounder and fail. (p. 2)

There is a need to constantly return and categorize and re-brand unexpected content according to the commercial news media's filters. On the one hand, this makes it easier to annotate and explain, thus maintaining a world order and consciousness that is conducive to their media product.

Charie S. Villa, Head of News Gathering for ABS-CBN 2 in 2009, and Grace O. de la Pena-Reyes, Head of News Gathering for GMA 7 also in 2009, say that their respective organizations follow certain standards when using amateur photos and video as content. The most important rule for Villa and de la Pena-Reyes is that the video and its source are vetted. Villa says their organization has set up a "receptacle where all photos and video go, and we ask [contributors] to leave a number so we can check [the validity of their material]" (personal communication, February 21, 2009). Of the copious amount of material, networks have had to filter these materials further and decide which items hit the airwaves. "*Usually, ngayon, at this time, parang yung shocking. Yung may shock value"* ("Usually these days, it's the shocking type, ones with shock value.") (Villa, personal communication, February 19, 2009). Villa adds that controversial videos of politicians caught vote-buying, for instance, are broadcast-worthy as well, especially if these were caught by an amateur. It is something akin to a "scandal," where "mass media immediately beamed its sights on the personages and institutions that should be moral role models for society, in order to expose and disparage social transgressions they were discovered to be involved in (Mangahas, 2009, p. 1). It is not uncommon, according to her paper on the Filipino fascination for scandals, to find "headline news typically [moving] from scandal to scandal." (p. 5)

Aside from the fact that this gives news programs a chance to stay in touch with its audience, Mangahas (2009) says:

> uploading and sharing links to 'scandal' via mobile phone and internet is an important way that a globalized diasporic Filipino population keeps touch with home, as well as to actively participate in influencing the development or resolution of a real scandal drama. (p. 2)

Though scandals have been around for a long time, I agree with Mangahas's proposition that the web and mobile tools have stoked the

creative flames of produsers. But whether or not diasporic Filipinos can indeed "influence or resolve" scandals that involve public figures, remains to be seen, despite the rhetoric of audience participation and citizen involvement that has accompanied the growing discourse of internet use. It is of interest how these very terms are utterances from the perspective of a mass media as hegemon, and produsers as still others—hailed as "audiences" in relation to their function as consumers, and their activities seen as "involved" only insofar as they are unthreatening to the institution.

RE-IMAGINING (A/NEW) MEDIA

Mass media sees its own created audiences as the uncanny within the Burkean scene; as agents there is an attempt to shift motives, to maintain a sense of order by applying categories on content that was created out of contingent moments in very individualized experiences. These are the undefined and unexpected moments and experiences captured by ordinary people, the spaces where the most potent moods exist, and which commercial media seize upon as their main characteristic for news.

This displaces the notion of news itself as an authoritative category of reality. The uneasy murmurs beneath the sound stages of networks is the realization that news is now packaged the way entertainment media is: dramatic, emotive, provocative, full of the "shock value" that aims to wrestle audience eyeballs from competitors by the persuasive force of mood and feeling. As a metaphor for reality, it is apparent that the use of user-generated video to headline the agenda of the day shifts the balance of power from a purely monolithic, panoptic point of view to one that relies on the fragmented experiences of an event, or the invention of an event, from the purview of over 90 million tele-individuals. Though the commercial news media do their best, and half the time succeed in neatly packaging the uncanny into human interest stories or the bizarre "man-bites-dog" flavor of news, the static and categorized view of reality will always only be continuously challenged as new content emerges out of 90 million potential interpretations of life or even of a single event. The Habermasian public sphere itself is shifting, finding new ways to be applicable to the infinite number of publics where there was previously the conception of only one. "[T]he construction of the amateur film and video maker as a free agent, able to record, edit and exhibit what they like" (Buckingham, Pini, & Wilett, 2007, p. 186) may represent an opportunity to revolutionize "big" media, not only in the construction of news, but also in the way sources and audiences are imagined (Pareles, in Buckingham, Pini, & Willet, 2007). Daya Thussu (2008) points out how decades of scholarship has effectively portrayed market-driven content on conglomerate television as nothing but

entertainment peddled as significant spectacle, a deterioration of discourse and the "marginalization of the important" (p. 5). The turn towards user-generated stories, though at first entertaining as news, may provide an impetus towards realigning mass media's agenda with the everyday, unseen struggles of a digitally-connected audience. While it fits narratives of human interest categories in news, it is first and foremost, of interest to the individual filming it; it is a moment of experience drawn from a complex network of factors, emerging out of the ambient conditions of everyday life.

With the irruption of the unfamiliar in our own spaces, and our need to come to terms with it, we find these audience-publics converging, more infinitely formed through networked preferences and motivations. It will be interesting to see if the commercial media can conceptualize strategies to keep present categories of audiences and acquire these highly networked ones outside of simply co-opting produsedcreations on their packaged programs. How the space will be shared, how people will relate to content and how broadcast news organizations and produsers find ways to work alongside each other may yet usher in a new conceptualization of the Philippine broadcast mediascape.

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