

# The creation of a new type of public sphere by journalistic boundary workers

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“*Anyone* with access to the  
internet can partake  
in digital journalism”

Waisbord (2019:352)

“Journalism as object of research has been destabilized and become increasingly slippery. Key concepts such as ‘journalism’ and ‘journalist,’ once taken for granted, are now subject to constant challenge and contestation. These challenges are likely to continue unabated, and to be amplified by further technological, social, economic, and political transformations. This, in turn, suggests a future of dynamic inquiry, **leading to even further diversification and a greater multiplicity of research traditions.**”

(Wahl Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2020:7)

# Research question and problem statement

**RQ:** What is the nature of the digital public sphere that is emerging on the boundaries of journalism, as facilitated by Facebook pages about Potchefstroom?

**Problem statement:** This study, a netnography, departs from an understanding that journalism **can no longer be understood by relying on assumptions about the hegemony of legacy media and a clear divide between journalists and their audiences**. Normative frameworks rooted in the Global North's perspective of journalism as the protector of democracy no longer provide a framework that is suitable for examining journalism in the digital age (see, among others, Hendrickx, 2022; Swart et al. 2022; Deuze & Witschge, 2020 and Deuze, 2019). This study explores the emergence of a new type of public sphere, online, which consists of peripheral actors in journalism deliberating about issues of public importance.

# Research design

- Qualitative research, by nature explanatory and interpretive in its search for understanding about social phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Iorio, 2011)
- Qualitative researchers use various methods to collect and analyse data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), includes my method, netnography
- Netnography is a qualitative research approach to social media (Kozinets, 2020)
- Boundary work is a theoretical approach to examine the roles of boundary workers in various fields (Carlson, 2020)
- Peripherality in journalism, terminology and approaches (Hanusch & Löhmann, 2022)
- The radical audience turn is an approach in journalism studies that examines the field of journalism from the perspective of the audience themselves, their needs and their actions (Swart et al., 2022)

# Theoretical approaches

- There is a need for a clear theoretical framework to examine peripheral actors in journalism (Hanusch & Löhmann, 2022)
- Hanusch & Löhmann in a 2022 formulated a **list of dimensions** that could help future scholars with terminology and a theoretical framework for peripheral actors in journalism
- **These are:** identities, practices, structures
- **Carlson's framework for boundary work:** expansion, expulsion, protection of autonomy
- Public sphere theories
- In the context of the radical audience turn in journalism

# Motivation for my study

- Legacy media facing many challenges - brought on by digital developments, social media, financial sustainability (see, for instance, Newman et al., 2022; Swart et al, 2022; Craig, 2020; Deuze & Witschge, 2020; Deuze, 2019; Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2019; Witschge et al 2016)
- Questions about the financing of journalism, questions about journalistic roles, questions about the definition of journalism and **the disappearance of professional journalism from many small communities around the world** (see, for instance, Hanitzsch & Örnebring, 2019; Kruger, 2022; Mabweazara & Mare, 2021; Reese 2019, 2022)
- Some scholars ask questions about the roles of new actors in journalism
- Zelizer, Boczkowski and Anderson (2022:9) argue: For too long journalism has been imagined as “an institution perched in pristine isolation from its surroundings”.



# Context: Legacy media is struggling

- News readership in the US fell from 122 million to 74 million between 1998 and 2018, one in five local papers closed (Abernathy, 2018)
- In South Africa it has halved, and more - **Sunday Times at its prime had circulation of just over 500 000, in 2023 it is 93 000**
- Digital outlets have not really managed to attract all those readers (Newman et al., 2022)
- **Local news outlets have been closing at an alarming rate around the world,** also in South Africa, but still good presence
- Legacy media physically moved away from small towns by closing bureaus (Nygren et al., 2018)
- **Loss of sense of community, local issues not on agenda, news deserts**

# Time to reassess journalism and its roles

- Social media have cast doubt on journalism's role as the ultimate gatekeeper and agenda-setter
- **The idealised vision of journalism in textbooks as autonomous, permanent and institutionalised, do not represent the current reality** (Zelizer et al., 2022)
- Journalism's continuing efforts to enforce exclusivity and to “establish structural boundaries around the field” have not succeeded in stopping new actors from emerging and taking part (Hanusch & Löhmann, 2022:3)
- **There is a clear need to move beyond what scholars call “an overreliance on journalism as an inherently stable institution”** (Reese and Shoemaker, 2016: 394)
- It is time to reassess journalism's normative role in society - it is also about helpful information and daily life (Hanusch & Löhmann, 2022)

# Normative traditions in journalism

- Gatekeeper, holding the powerful to account
- Informs the public
- Puts issues on the agenda (through its public sphere role)
- Formalised structures, professional roles (Lewis, 2011, Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, 2019)
- **Helps society function** (Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, 2009)
- Still true for legacy media, but no longer exclusively legacy media who do these things
- In many cases legacy media have disappeared - news deserts
- What is taking its place? **Peripheral actors**
- **An examination of the roles of peripheral actors in journalism will help develop new understandings of journalism, which are necessary in the digital era** (Swart et al., 2022; Hendrickx, 2022)

Peripheral journalism is: “A particular type of storytelling conducted by people who are traditionally not associated with the codified, institutionalised and routinized social practices known as journalism. These actors can be viewed as interlopers, strangers, uninvited guests and gate crashers in the journalistic field in the sense that they have no formal journalistic training, are not hamstrung by the ethical journalistic baggage, do not religiously adhere to formulaic writing and packaging of content and are driven by the desire to tell societal stories using available technologies such as pavement radio, websites, mobile phones, blogs, mobile instant messaging apps and social media platforms.”

Mututwa and Mare (2022:2)

# Protecting the boundaries

- There are two clear strands in journalism research - **protecting the institution**, often with an argument of “quality” and normative ideals vs **extending the boundaries**
- Normative ideal of journalism as protector of democracy is often used as justification for expelling peripheral actors from the institution of journalism (Daniels, 2020)
- The normative role of journalism in democracy has often been seen as a means for citizens to “political access, expression, and participation” (Hanitzsch & Örnebring, 2019:110)
- **Journalistic professional identity** is “derived from a view that emphasizes journalism’s (potential) contribution to the proper workings of democracy to ensure that citizens are well-informed about their society in order to make rational decisions” (Hanitzsch & Örnebring, 2019:110)

# Assumptions about journalism and democracy

- Reliance on the assumption that journalism is defender of democracy has led to the construction of a theoretical framework that considers journalism “in terms of its more or less consensual news values, dominant frames, routinized operations, gatekeeping functions, and industrial arrangements” (Deuze, 2019:3)
- ***The Handbook of Journalism Studies* questions “tight normative coupling of journalism with democracy”**. The “inextricable linkage of journalism and democracy is largely a Western imposition” (Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, 2019:9)
- Neglects all the other things journalism can be and does, neglects journalism in authoritarian states, neglects audience role in public sphere
- Scholarship has also marginalised journalism that caters to public needs in everyday life (Hanitzch & Örnebring, 2019), **what helps society function**

# Journalism was never stable everywhere

- The idea of journalism as an autonomous, stable institution in society was developed mostly by “white, male, high-status” thinkers in liberal democracies of the Global North (Zelizer et al., 2022)
- **Most journalism studies, until relatively recently, approached the field from the liberal democratic view** - “journalism is important for democracy”
- There has always been types of journalism that did not fit into the neat Global North categorisation
- Much work has emerged in Africa, exploring journalism from a Global South context, different roles, different way of storytelling (Bosch, 2020, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2010; Dube, 2017; Mabweazara and Mare, 2021; Mututwa and Mare, 2022; Wahutu, 2019)
- **Digital era: Work on peripheral actors** in journalism and social media’s role

# Social media to the fore

- In Africa, as elsewhere in the world, “social media platforms, which enable readers to comment, share and deliberate on stories, have become near ubiquitous in even the poorest regions of Africa” (Mabweazara & Mare, 2021:1)
- In Africa, Facebook is still the most popular source for news among all users (55%), but YouTube is becoming increasingly popular (44%) (Newman, 2022)
- In South Africa 68% of people find their news on social media (compared to 33% in print and 89% on all online media)
- Most popular social media platform for news in SA is Facebook, where 52% of respondents in the Reuters survey find their news (Newman, 2022).
- In 2022 there were 27 million Facebook users in South Africa (Rumney, 2022)



# Representation: Is there still a digital divide?

- Mobile phone penetration is very high, at 170%, which means many people own more than one mobile phone (Odhiambo, 2022)
- At least 90% of South Africans own one mobile phone (Odhiambo, 2022)
- High cost of data still means many people are excluded from regular internet access. In 2022, 68% of South Africans had some form of internet access (Kemp, 2022)
- Facebook and YouTube are the two most popular platforms that South Africans accessed via their mobile phones (Kemp, 2022)
- In Africa, unlike in the rest of the world, **Facebook is still growing** and becoming even more popular. This is due to ease of access (Malik, 2022)

# **The journalistic public sphere**

“By ‘the public sphere’ we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body. They then behave neither like business or professional people transacting private affairs, nor like members of a constitutional order subject to the legal constraints of a state bureaucracy. Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion – that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions – about matters of general interest.”

Habermas et al. (1974:49)

# ***Communication Theory* Special Issue (May 2023)**

- Reconceptualizing public sphere(s) in the digital age? Nine theses, based on works from 1990s to 2023 (Eisenegger & Schäfer, 2023):
  - 1. Still widely used in scholarship, but mostly theorising
  - 2. Used, but with gaps (no clear definitions), biases (Western-centric, but with some recent focus on Asian public sphere, thanks to Weibo, WeChat, Duoyin)
  - 3. Habermas is losing influence, due to digital turn
  - 4. Normative function still seen as valid - legitimate social order
  - 5. Non-Western public spheres - focus on generalised functions, relationship between state and its citizens

## More theses

- 6. There is no unified public sphere. Digital era has created multiple public spheres, international, national, local, hyperlocal - fragmentation, scattered audiences
- 7. Shift from situational (the media) public sphere to ubiquitous public sphere - always on
- 8. Infrastructure of the public sphere is changing - weakening of established intermediaries (the media), strengthening of new platforms
- 9. AI may once again change the public sphere

# Journalism's normative public sphere role

- Legacy media have traditionally been seen as the mediators of public sphere deliberation
- “For about a decade now, many researchers and other observers have been asking whether the internet will have – or is already having – an influence on the public sphere” Dahlgren (2005: 147)
- Much research exploring the digital public sphere (**the real public**), to explore whether it displays some of the characteristics of our general understanding of the journalistic public sphere (see, for instance, Casero-Ripollés, Micó-Sanz & Díez-Bosch, 2020; De Blasio, Kneuer, Schünemann, Wolf & Sorice 2020; Evans 2021)
- It becomes inevitable to ask questions about journalism's public sphere role

# Redefining the journalistic public sphere

- Has been normative, prescriptive (Eisenegger & Schäfer, 2023)
- In the digital age, public deliberation on matters of importance happens in many different ways, across borders (Fraser, 2007:7)
- This means there is a need to question the basic assumptions of the public sphere as proposed by Habermas (see, for instance, Bruns & Highfield, 2016; Schlesinger, 2020; Swart et al., 2022) as social media (the former audience) have already created different types of public spheres
- Public sphere theory has always been subject to contestation - women excluded, media companies filter deliberation (McNair, 2018)

“Moving beyond the orthodox model of the public sphere to a more dynamic and complex system provides the opportunity to more clearly recognise the varying forms public communication can take online. Unpacking the traditional public sphere into a series of public sphericules and micro-publics, none of which are mutually exclusive but which co-exist, intersecting and overlapping in multiple forms, is one approach to understanding the ongoing structural transformation of the public sphere.”

(Bruns & Highfield, 2016:125-126)



# The role of the audience in the new public sphere

- Audiences have long been excluded from journalism studies, partially because of the logistical ease of studying newsroom practices and roles (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2019)
- Journalistic scholars, therefore, often focus on “producer-oriented” concerns instead of the perspective of the audience (Swart et al., 2022:9)
- Audiences have come back into focus, particularly in digital journalism studies
- Hendrickx (2022), Swart et al (2022) and Costera Meijer (2020) agree that there is a growing realisation that audiences are important in academic study because of, among others, changes in news reach, changing user habits and user practices, audience engagement and changes in the political citizenship roles of audiences.

# Grudging acceptance of the audience role

- **Fears:** “Highway to popularization and sensationalism” (Costera Meijer, 2020:2326)
- “For a long time, **quality journalism** functioned not only as a practice, a standard of excellence or a particular genre of public interest news; as a discourse it could be mobilized as a strong and effective argument against unwelcome changes in journalism” (Costera Meijer, 2020:2327)
- There is more focus on journalism’s role in everyday life now, because of changing audience needs (Hanusch, 2020)
- There is an increasing focus on the role of the audience themselves in journalism and public deliberation, despite much initial resistance among scholars (see Swart et al, 2022)

# Radical audience turn

- **Radical audience turn** in journalism studies, radical because it is such a big departure from journalism studies that traditionally examined the audience from the perspectives of news organisations and industry concerns
- The radical audience turn argues for an examination of journalism from the perspective of the audience as active agents (Hendrickx, 2022), from perspectives of audience themselves (Swart et al., 2022)
- **New definitions of news.** The way audiences perceive news is often far removed from the traditional boundaries of journalism. Certain types of news, information and deliberation are important to audiences, **informative**
- Users seek networking and in-depth information, participation (Peters et al., 2021)

# The audience as public sphere mediator

- Audiences are filling the gaps left by legacy media leaving local and hyperlocal news environments, but also nationally and internationally (Anderson, 2013)
- Audiences in Africa now also “clearly manifest themselves online in various forms, including commenting directly on stories, writing on blogs attached to news websites, WhatsApping, Tweeting or Facebooking **in ways that challenge and complement journalists’ traditional roles as sole arbiters and purveyors of information**” (Mabweazara & Mare, 2021:1)
- Audiences are moving to online spaces for community deliberation, because legacy media, especially printed newspapers, are no longer as influential in hyperlocal areas as they used to be (Beavon, 2019; Karlsson & Rowe, 2019; Nygren, 2019)

“Citizens have the capacity to produce their own podcasts, blogs, and video channels on YouTube. They can tweet to their ‘followers’ on Twitter, and post about politics on Facebook ... Through online sharing news and commentary spread virally through social networks, often bypassing the traditional editorial pathways of established public sphere media.”

(McNair, 2018:161)

# How can we evaluate the new public sphere?

- “A constellation of communicative spaces in society that permit the circulation of information, ideas, debates – ideally in an unfettered manner—and also the formation of political will (i.e. public opinion)” (Dahlgren, 2005:148)
- These spaces used to be the mass media, but now include the internet and all associated electronic media types
- The public sphere consists of three dimensions, namely **structures** (media, internet), **representation** (output) and **interaction** (between citizens and those in power, between citizens themselves) (Dahlgren, 2005)
- Also: Information, interpretation (making sense of the world), interrogation (the watchdog function), representation (presenting the views of the public to those in power) and advocacy (taking sides in political debates) (McNair, 2018)

# Fear of disinformation

- **One of the main criticisms against the audience:** Fear among some researchers that social media lead to the spread of “misinformation, mal-information, disinformation and propaganda” (Daniels, 2020:xii).
- Phenomenon of fake news in Africa should not be seen as something that has necessarily become worse because of digitalisation, has always been part of storytelling, posters, music, jokes (Mare, 2020)

# Audiences are already influencing political life

- Despite fears, audiences are creating news, deliberating on the news, influencing political life
- Social media activists have brought about real political change, Arab Spring to #Rhodesmustfall (Bosch, 2017; Douai & Ben Moussa, 2016)
- Arab Spring did not free journalism, but it did increase influence of non-professional reporters on social media (Mutsvairo & Bebawi, 2022)
- Global South provides opportunity for new ways of looking at journalism, to explore the emergence of diverse voices and alternative narratives



# Audiences are more sophisticated than we think

- Audiences (peripheral actors in journalism) have developed sophisticated media and information literacies (Nielsen et al., 2016; Swart, 2021)
- Social media help shape democracy in Africa in many different ways, it differs from country to country
- Social media activism in Africa range from protest movements to creating new spaces for political discourse (Dwyer and Molony, 2019)
- Facebook pages and other social media platforms, serve as platforms for classifieds and community notices, spaces where news and events appear to be discussed in a mediated way (García-Avilés et al., 2018; Nygren, 2019; Nygren et al., 2018)

## But, it is not just about democracy

- We can extend our understanding of public sphere deliberation
- Many studies have identified functions of the public sphere online
- We need to also look at the digital public sphere from the perspective of the audiences
- What issues are important to the public?
- How do they deliberate over these issues?
- Journalism and everyday life - how do these digital public spheres help people make daily life decisions?
- Lifestyle choices - important to daily life

# Lifestyle and daily life

- Lifestyle journalism has often been viewed as “trivial”, but it has been argued that lifestyle journalism can have a civic potential (Fürsich, 2012).
- Lifestyle journalists view themselves not only as journalists, but as service providers, life coaches, community advocates and entertainers (Hanusch, 2019)
- These are roles that move beyond traditional normative understandings of journalism and news
- Lifestyle journalism such as travel and music journalism can play a role in “the negotiation of ongoing global cultural change” (Fürsich, 2012:23)

## **Some Southern African examples**

# CITE in Zimbabwe

- Centre for Innovation and Technology, Bulawayo, formed in 2015 to integrate art and activism, presence on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp and Telegram, using its online platforms to promote social change
- CITE provides a digital discursive space that allows the audience to comment on issues of concern to them
- CITE constitutes a digital public sphere:: “Elements of advocacy or activist journalism are emerging as CITE enables citizens to challenge historical injustices, oppression and marginalisation in Zimbabwe” (Ndzinisa et al., 2021:60-61)

# Diasporic communities

- Mainstream media in countries where Zimbabwean diasporic communities are based show little interest in the perspectives of these communities, which has led to the emergence of digital counter-publics (Mpofu, Asak and Salawu; 2022)
- Facebook offers these Zimbabwean communities abroad the chance to create networking sites where information is shared, wide-ranging public debate takes place
- Peripheral actors took over public sphere functions because mainstream media did not serve them

# The Coronavirus pandemic

- Led to the emergence of many alternative public spheres, internationally and in the Global South
- Peripheral actors during the Covid-19 pandemic in Zimbabwe played an important role
- These peripheral actors on social media (intellectuals, ordinary people and influencers) played an instrumental role in educating the public and in providing important information about the pandemic when other media outlets and the government failed to do so (Mututwa and Mare, 2021)

# Potchefstroom as my study

- JB Marks Municipality (Potchefstroom, Ventersdorp) – 212 670 ([Census 2022](#))
- Potch Koop en Verkoop (68 000 FB followers) – a trading site
- NWU Potchefstroom students (65 600 FB members) – student page
- Potchefstroom (39 100 FB members) – a general information page

**VS.**

- *Potchefstroom Herald* (local newspaper) - Facebook followers 41 000;  
newspaper circulation 16 938 ([Bizcommunity](#))



## **Some recent anecdotal examples**

# Trevor Noah: Viral TikTok Post Sparks Debate About Whether Comedian Is Coloured or Mixed Race

🕒 Updated Friday, September 01, 2023 at 11:28 AM • by [Privie Kandi](#)

- South African comedian Trevor Noah found himself a hot topic of discussion on Twitter
- The conversation started when a Mzansi TikTok user was dragged by Americans for calling herself coloured
- The former *Daily Show* host's name popped up as South Africans tried to explain the difference between coloured and mixed race

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POV: the whole salon is  
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**b4ITall**

coloured in south Africa is Bi-Racial in the West.



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**Sarah Mashaakgomo**

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@taylorswift13 en Argentina, como fandom nos vemos en la necesidad de hablar sobre las próximas elecciones argentinas y el futuro del país.

Como dijo Taylor: tenemos la necesidad de estar en el lado correcto de la historia.

#SwiftiesAgainstLLA

Translate post

A pocos días de los tan esperados rectales de Taylor Swift en Argentina, el futuro de nuestro país va a estar en disputa: el 19 de noviembre será el **balotaje para elegir al próximo presidente de Argentina**.

Uno de los candidatos, Javier Milei, líder de un partido mal llamado liberal, es en realidad el representante de la **derecha antidemocrática** que viene a sacarnos todos los derechos adquiridos. ¿Por qué esto no tiene que llamar como fandom? Porque Milei es Trump, y porque no podemos no dar la batalla luego de haber escuchado y visto a Taylor dar todo para que la derecha no gane en su país.

En el documental de Netflix, Miss Americana, Taylor Swift habla de "**la necesidad de estar en el lado correcto de la historia**" al dar su posición en las próximas elecciones en los Estados Unidos. Nosotros, como comunidad, tenemos que enfrentar esa misma necesidad.

El partido de La Libertad Avanza tiene dentro de su plataforma electoral propuestas como la privatización de la salud y la educación, la libre tenencia de armas y realizar un referéndum sobre la última Ley de Intervención Voluntaria del Embarazo. Por su parte, en diversas entrevistas los candidatos del partido hablan de "excesos" al referirse a las muertes, torturas y desapariciones llevadas a cabo por el Estado en la última dictadura militar, consideran que el matrimonio igualitario es innecesario, dicen que el feminismo es una mentira, que la brecha salarial por género en el mercado laboral no existe y consideran que habría que habilitar la venta de órganos o incluso

Así mismo, contra otros países.

Al dar la primera opinión política en su carrera, Taylor dice:

"Siempre he emitido y siempre emitiré mi voto en función de qué candidato protegeré y lucharé por los derechos humanos que creo que todos merecemos en este país. Creo en la lucha por los derechos LGBTQ y que cualquier forma de discriminación basada en la orientación sexual o el género está MAL. Creo que el racismo sistémico que todavía vemos en este país hacia las personas de color es aterrador, repugnante y frecuente. (...) No puedo votar por alguien que no esté dispuesto a luchar por la dignidad de TODOS los estadounidenses, sin importar su color de piel, género o a quién amen. **Voté en contra de la igualdad salarial para las mujeres.** **Voté en contra de la Reautorización de la Ley de Violencia contra la Mujer,** que intenta proteger a las mujeres de la violencia doméstica, el acoso y la violación en citas. **Ella cree que las empresas tienen derecho a negar servicios a parejas homosexuales.** También cree que no deberían tener derecho a casarse. Estos no son MIS valores de Tennessee."

Siguiendo su legado, y ante el peligro que representa el candidato Javier Milei, principalmente para las mujeres y diversidades, el 19 de noviembre NO los vamos a votar.

Y como dijo Taylor:

Cheers to the resistance!

2:51 PM · Oct 26, 2023 · 1.3M Views

3,294 Reposts 2,951 Quotes

2:51 PM · Oct 26, 2023 · 1.3M Views

957 6.2K 12K 452



**Swifties Contra...** @swiftAgains... · 18h ...

El candidato Milei y su partido de La libertad avanza representa un peligro para la democracia y los derechos humanos de todos los argentinos, pero principalmente para las mujeres y diversidades.

Como swifties, después de Miss americana, NO podemos votar eso.

Milei=Trump

89 558 3K 103K



**Swifties Contra...** @swiftAgains... · 18h ...

Necesitamos su apoyo @taylorswift13 @taylornation13 📩

37 125 1K 61K



**LUCILA** @lucilangeles · 16h ...

Politizar un fandom me parece denigrante

32 35 539 22K



**Swifties Contra...** @swiftAgains... · 16h ...

estamos simplemente usando citas textuales de Taylor, si te molesta que una artista de su opinion de politica es otra cosa

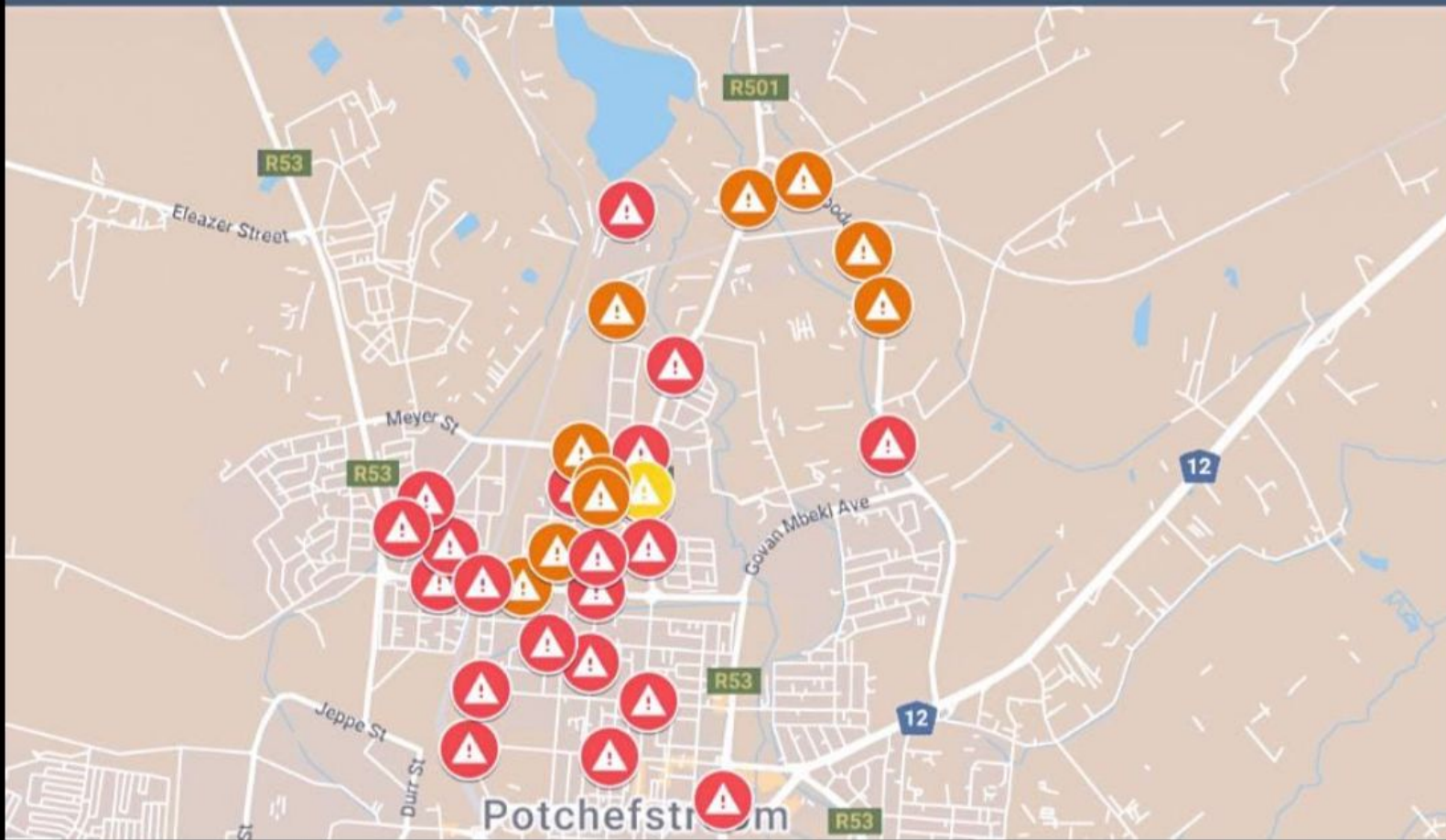
26 44 1.2K 21K







# Potholes in Potchefstroom





## Some questions to consider

- How can we define the new type of public sphere that does what journalistic public sphere did?
- How is this public sphere helping citizens make informed decisions about daily life?
- How are citizens participating in meaningful discussions?
- How are important topics placed on the agenda?
- When these important topics remain on social media, do they count as “being on the agenda”?
- Do these deliberations inform the public debate, public policy? Form public opinion?



# Summary

- We need to redefine journalism, the changes in the digital era makes this inevitable
- Audiences have more agency and more sophisticated skills when negotiating news and deliberating online than we give them credit for
- Audiences are replacing journalists in locations where legacy media are absent or have lost influence
- Audiences mediate public sphere deliberation themselves
- This audience deliberation affects politics, daily life, formation of opinion, activism
- The new public sphere is being run by the public themselves, often following journalistic conventions, but they remain seen as “peripheral”

# Recommendations

- Research - we need to rethink our conceptualisations of the public sphere and how it operates in the digital space
- We need to empower the audience through our research
- Education - we need to think about how we teach journalism
- Important because we need to understand how journalism is changing, how the public sphere is changing, new definitions of journalism will broaden the field, not weaken it
- Peripheral actors - integrate into journalism and journalism studies

“Moving beyond [existential] angst involves making peace with the blurred and porous boundaries between newsmaker, news reporter, news consumer and news distributor. It demands a degree of reflexivity by journalists, going beyond new journalistic practices, and addresses strongly held beliefs of what it means to a journalist. It demands embracing a mindset that engages with the logics of new media spaces, responds to changing information routines and audience practices, and embraces the wide gamut of forces involved in the production, dissemination and circulation of news and information.”

(Hermida, 2019)

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