

Journalistic Values and Expertise in Platform News Distribution: The Possibilities and Limitations of Participatory Panels for Algorithmic Governance | Journalism Studies

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This paper describes a participatory approach to realize journalistic ethics and values in platform news distribution systems. Using methods from participatory governance and design thinking, three panels of journalists and platform news representatives in 2020 tried to find consensus around value definitions that could inform the ranking and recommendation of news articles. Examining how they negotiated the areas of local, opinion, and science/health journalism, we discover possibilities and limitations for journalists to inform the design of these systems. More broadly, the effort to prioritize news content according to journalistic values belongs to a larger question regarding the role of expertise within democratic societies. The establishment of technical definitions in collaboration with others can be understood as a softer form of algorithmic governance. This governance may allow for some democratizing potential in online systems, here within a “minipublic” model defined by political scientist Archon Fung. Yet the implementation of these definitions remains within the decision-making power of technology companies that do not identify as news publishers. The exploration into platform news distribution is an opportunity to reflect on the challenges of governance, both algorithmic and democratic.

[...]

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