

Alternative Pathways to Journalism and Inclusive Spaces for Marginalised Voices

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Abstract

Sweden is a post-migrant society; however, this diversity is not reflected in the Swedish media (Frigyes, 2021). In recent years, anti-immigrant sentiment has increased in Sweden, and as a result, public discourse on immigration has become much harsher (Ekman & Krzyżanowski, 2021). The ethnically diverse suburbs of Sweden's largest cities and the youth residing therein have become symbols of failed integration in the public debate (Sernhede et al., 2019). One of these suburbs, Alby, is home to the Fanzingo media house. They work with marginalised youth to diversify the media and improve their representation. The objective of this paper is to explore how Fanzingo gives voice to marginalised youth in their quest to diversify Swedish media. This is achieved by conducting 12 semi-structured interviews with individuals involved in Fanzingo's project *Young Correspondents* and developing and applying the initiate, cultivate, amplify model (ICA-model) and the theoretical concepts of "voice" and "listening". The paper argues that listening is imperative to the production and dissemination process of participatory media. It also concludes that the financial situation is a major obstacle for organisations like Fanzingo, and that although collaborations with mainstream media provide the marginalised youth with networks and connections, conflicting journalistic ideals and unequal power relations risk preventing collaborations from becoming true and equal partnerships.

Keywords

listening, voice, inclusive journalism, marginalised voices

Introduction

Sweden is a post-migrant society (Foroutan, 2015), with 34.7% of the Swedish population of foreign origin (Statistikdatabasen, 2024a, 2024b). However, this diversity is not reflected in the Swedish media (Frigyes, 2021). Swedish journalists are a homogeneous group. Most reside in affluent areas in the city centres (Wallentin & Olsson, 2023), and a few have an immigrant background (Hultén, 2016).

In recent years, anti-immigrant sentiment has increased in Sweden, and as a result, public discourse on immigration has become much harsher (Ekman & Krzyżanowski, 2021). The ethnically diverse suburbs of Sweden's largest cities and the youth residing therein have become symbols of failed integration in the public debate (Sernhede et al., 2019). These areas have high immigrant populations and are considered to have severe socio-economic problems, often referred to as the suburb problem in the public debate. It can therefore be argued that these areas are racialised, that is, othered, in the same way as most of the population in these areas (Molina, 1997). One of these suburbs, Alby, is home to the media house Fanzingo. Since 2006, they have been working with marginalised youth to diversify the media and improve their representation. To enhance the youth perspective in Swedish media, Fanzingo launched the project *Young Correspondents* in 2021, which this paper focuses on.

This paper is based on a series of 12 semi-structured interviews with individuals involved in Fanzingo's *Young Correspondents* project. The objective of this paper is to explore how Fanzingo gives voice to marginalised youth and promotes greater diversity in the Swedish media industry by making journalism more accessible through its *Young Correspondents* project. The paper develops and applies the initiate, cultivate, amplify (ICA) model and the theoretical concepts of "voice" and "listening". The paper introduces the ICA model to examine the production process of participatory media projects and how voice (Couldry, 2010) and listening (Bassel, 2017; Dreher, 2012; Dreher & de Souza, 2021) are utilised in this process.

Theory

Democratic Communication: Voice and listening

The concept of "communication", particularly in the context of democratic discourse, encompasses not only speaking but also listening (Dreher, 2012). However, due to the centrality of voice in democratic societies, as reflected in laws protecting freedom of speech, voice has received more attention than listening (Lacey, 2013). However, scholars have recently begun to address the limitations of this metaphorical "voice" (see Couldry, 2010; Dreher, 2012). While acknowledging the significance of voice, these scholars propose that we must also consider the transformative potential of voice within the context of structural change; if no one listens, "voice" remains an empty emancipatory promise. This line of reasoning is strongly influenced by Gayatri Spivak's (1988) *Can the Subaltern Speak*.

In this regard, Nick Couldry (2010) distinguishes between two levels of voice: voice as process and voice as value. The former, voice as a process, refers to the process of giving an account of one's life, while the latter, voice as a value, "refer[s] to the act of valuing, and choosing to value, those frameworks for organising human life and resources that themselves value voice (as a process)" (Couldry, 2010, p. 2). Voice is often the driving value that propels the production of various forms of alternative media, which must also encompass the potential for being heard (Couldry, 2015).

Dreher (2012) posits that listening serves as a potent metaphor for analysing "the other side" of voice, emphasising the significance of attention and response, openness, and recognition to complete the circuits of democratic communication. According to Leah Bassel (2017), the practice of listening with humanity and ethical care can serve as a significant counterbalance to polarisation and societal divisions. The act of sharing personal narratives and observing how they are intertwined can reinforce a sense of interconnectedness, which, in turn, can lead to political recognition.

Inspired by Tanja Dreher and Poppy de Souza (2021), this paper will operationalise listening as receptivity, recognition and response. Moreover, listening is not conceptualised as something that occurs only when media productions meet their audience, but rather as part of communication; different aspects of listening occur throughout the production and dissemination process. The concept of "receptivity" is introduced to evaluate the extent to which Fanzingo listens to the needs and voices of young participants in media production. Beyond the immediate context of Fanzingo, it involves how other actors in society are receptive to these voices and to Fanzingo as an organisation. The concept of "recognition" pertains to the valuation of young voices within the production process. Beyond the organisational context, recognition pertains to the societal and media industry-specific valuation of Fanzingo as a media house. Finally, the response examines how Fanzingo responds to young participants and how other actors in the mainstream public sphere respond to Fanzingo.

Initiate, Cultivate, Amplify Model for Participatory Media

To better analyse the production process of participatory media projects that seek to amplify the voices of marginalised groups, this paper introduces the ICA model, which divides the production process into three distinct stages: initiate, cultivate and amplify. This division facilitates a more thorough examination of the role of voice and listening in all stages of the production process.

1. **Initiate:** the stage marks the beginning of the production process, but is also itself a process. It means that the participants begin to realise (a) the possession of a voice, (b) the value of communicating and sharing it, and (c) the articulation of their intended message.
2. **Cultivate:** the second step refers to the process by which the voices and stories are explored and allowed to mature with the guidance and help of the professionals.

3. Amplify: the last step involves reaching a broader audience to get these voices heard. Several strategies can be utilised, including using dissemination channels, social media platforms, networks, and collaborations.

The relationship between these stages is progressive, but there is a circular movement between cultivate and amplify (Figure 1). There is always an opportunity to learn new skills or experiment with different storytelling techniques or media formats. Moreover, the process of reaching out starts each time a new story is produced.

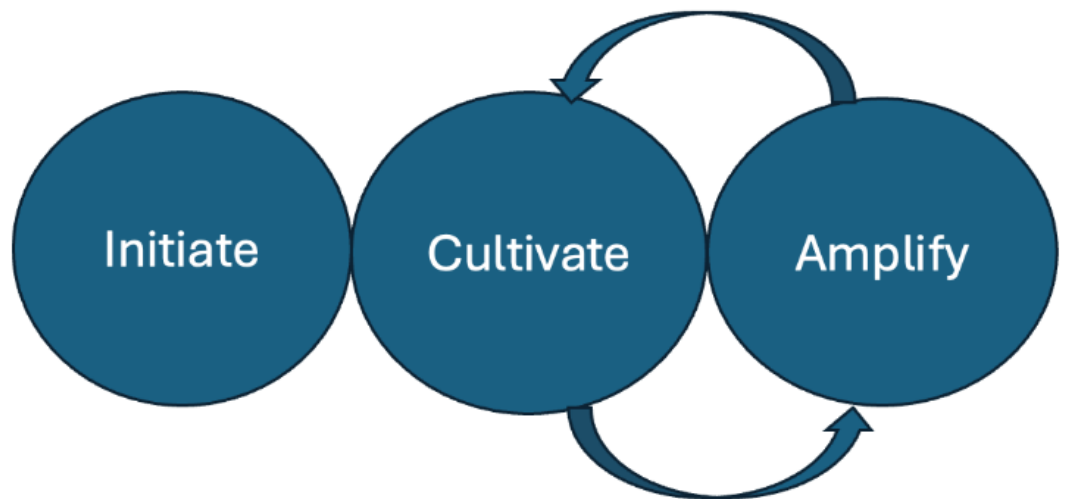


Figure 1.
ICA-model.

Methodology

This paper is based on a study that is part of the larger research project *Post-Migrant Voices in the Baltic Sea Region*, which explores the conditions under which post-migrant voices are heard in the media. The present paper focuses on 12 semi-structured interviews with individuals involved with Fanzingo's *Young Correspondents* project in various capacities. These individuals include three Fanzingo employees, six young participants in the project, one editor and two mentors from *Aftonbladet*, with whom Fanzingo ran a mentorship programme to strengthen the outcome of the project. The interviews were conducted between January and October 2023, either via Zoom or in person. There was no prior contact between the researcher and Fanzingo prior to

the research beginning. The informants were recruited through snowball sampling and from a list of young people who had participated in the project and the mentorship programme, with the aim of capturing a diversity of experiences. The interviews were transcribed, and an initial open coding of these interviews, together with additional interviews with other persons connected to Fanzingo, helped to develop the ICA model, which seeks to explain the production process of participatory media. A systematic analysis was then conducted on the 12 interviews utilised for this paper, employing the ICA model and the theoretical concepts of “voice” and “listening” to better understand how Fanzingo strengthens the voices of marginalised youth to diversify Swedish media.

Analysis: Fanzingo and *Young Correspondents*

The idea of the project is to help young people get into Swedish media by employing and training young people from across Sweden for nine months to a year. If interested, young people could apply, and no previous experience was required. Over 100 applicants applied annually to the project, of whom 10–15 were selected and employed part-time at 10%. The applicants were selected to create diversity in terms of geographical placement, profiles, and previous experience among the participants. The project was developed to enhance the reporting of issues pertinent to young people and to provide marginalised youth with access to journalistic production.

Initiate

The term “initiate” is employed to denote the process whereby the individual, in this case the young person, is encouraged to “discover their voice”. The duration of this process varies, contingent on the stage at which individuals arrive at Fanzingo. The realisation that one possesses a significant contribution to offer, despite the pervasive societal discourse that portrays young people from these areas as problematic, as youth with substandard academic achievements who face limited prospects, is an ongoing process, as repeated exposure to these negative portrayals can lead to their internalisation.

In the *Young Correspondents* project, participants’ prior experience producing media content varied significantly. Indeed, some participants were enrolled in journalism education, whilst others had no prior experience of journalism. Therefore, the project commenced with a start-up week at Fanzingo, where the youth were provided with an intensive course in ethics and journalistic guidelines. Subsequent workshops then ensued to initiate the creative process of storytelling:

that you are seen. That your stories have value regardless of whether you even know what a preamble is. (...) I’m pretty sure that many young people, like me when I was young, perceive, for example, JMK [School of Journalism, Stockholm University] as something quite prestigious. And something quite

difficult to get into. An institution that emphasises, as one should, that here we learn the basics (...). In contrast to that, all the projects at Fanzingo emphasise the stories. And if someone says they don't know what a preamble is, I often say (...) what is it you want to say? We customise forms for what you want to say, depending on what level you are at in terms of craftsmanship. The important thing is that you want to say something, and I think that is empowering. (Project leader, male, personal communication, September 27, 2023)

The underlying philosophy of this pedagogical approach, as articulated in the selected quote, is that Fanzingo aspires to provide an alternative to conventional journalism education. In contrast to institutions such as the School of Journalism (Stockholm University), a fundamental tenet at Fanzingo is the belief that young individuals, irrespective of their academic performance, prior knowledge of journalism, or personal background, should feel acknowledged and cherished. The paramount concern is their aspiration to articulate their ideas. Therefore, being *receptive* and making them feel accepted and *recognised* is crucial. To accomplish this objective, it is imperative to adopt a divergent approach:

then we move on to workshops where the young people share what they want to tell. We try to move quickly to the practical work (...). It's easier to work with real-life examples than to use language that we often expect everyone in society to share. As a White, middle-class man who has worked in the media industry all my life, I talk to you about journalism in a way that I expect you and I to share (...). But we can't always expect that from our participants. (Project leader, male, personal communication, September 27, 2023)

It is conceivable that the journalistic discourse may be alien to a significant proportion of the participants. Consequently, immersing oneself in the practical aspects and acquiring knowledge through practice-based learning is a strategy for bridging the knowledge gap among participants. This approach is inclusive, as it does not allow structural differences to define the candidates and their participation in the project. This inclusive approach can therefore be perceived as Fanzingo's *response*.

Cultivate

Following the inaugural week of the project, the second phase commenced, which also marked the start of the second stage of the production process, cultivation. At this juncture, the participants began working on their journalistic productions. The participants were required to submit a piece of journalistic content monthly for publication on the Voices of Sweden platform. They had the liberty to select the format, topic and angle of their pieces, but were obliged to consult with the editor and project leader at Fanzingo to discuss their ideas. The content could be a written text, a video or a podcast episode. Throughout the production process, the participants received feedback from the editor and project leader to develop their journalistic skills, which involve both *voice* and *listening*.

One of the participants offered the following description of his experience of participating in the project:

it's an incredible asset for all young people who want to work in journalism. So, we were told "the sky is the limit", and we were allowed to come up with any idea we wanted, and we were allowed to realise most. And if a minister came to Botkyrka, where it is located, it was like this: yes, we will try fix an interview. And we had access to a lot of very talented people in both journalism and media in general, and we got feedback from them. No, but it was just a huge asset to be able to experiment and develop in the media. (Participant, *Young Correspondents*, male, personal communication, August 28, 2023)

As posited by the quote, Fanzingo functions as a professional and experimental space, where young people feel trusted and taken seriously. The production process was characterised by freedom and creativity, as Fanzingo communicated that the ideas of youth were valuable (*recognition*) and when presented to Fanzingo, met with the response that "anything is possible" (*response*). The phrase "anything is possible" is not to be interpreted literally but rather symbolises Fanzingo's efforts to actualise the aspirations of the youth. To do so, Fanzingo needs to be *receptive*.

To develop their skills, the youth also gained access to resources and guidance from Fanzingo employees. Most individuals work 50% of their time at Fanzingo and the remaining time elsewhere in the media industry, thereby expanding the network and resources available to youth. One such example is the recurrent question & answer (QA) sessions with industry experts:

and then we had QA sessions with people from the industry. It's another educational exercise, but also to empower the youth. It is very common for young people who come to us to feel that they do not have access to certain spaces and certain people, both physical spaces in society, but also contexts. And then I usually start by saying (...), who do you want to talk to in the media industry? Everyone wants to talk to you, so here, choose! Who do you want to talk to? Who do you want to ask questions to? Who do you want to interview? (Project leader, male, personal communication, September 27, 2023)

The quote indicates that these sessions provide youth with access to spaces, people and contexts that many of them previously lacked, offering a platform where they could inquire about any subject of interest. The fact that the youth are asked who they want to talk to and are told that "everyone wants to talk to you" demonstrates the *receptiveness* towards and *recognition* of the young people, both at Fanzingo and beyond. The quote further emphasises that Fanzingo's response is that "anything is possible", as the youth are at liberty to select whom they wish to converse with. Fanzingo will ensure that their wishes are realised. This conveys the notion that Fanzingo values and listens to the youth's voice and acknowledges their presence. Consequently, these QA sessions can be interpreted as Fanzingo's *response* to the needs and wishes of young people and as a means of facilitating their involvement in the design of the training.

The project provided youth with access to new spaces, people, and skills, as well as the opportunity to engage with the field of journalism. For some participants, the project has rendered their aspirations of a career in media and journalism more attainable, with several opting to pursue further education in journalism and media production.

Amplify

In the third step of the process, the focus is on amplifying the voices of young people and enhancing the diversity of Swedish media. Fanzingo implements various strategies to achieve this objective. The leading platform for publishing the content produced by *Young Correspondents* is the Voices of Sweden online platform.

The main obstacle with this platform is its limited outreach, primarily to individuals already interested in journalism, predominantly women between the ages of 20 and 30. To reach younger demographics, Fanzingo uses its social media accounts. However, there is a mismatch between the logic of social media and the nature of the content produced by Fanzingo, primarily due to the limited attention span of social media users, which makes it challenging to “break through the noise”. Moreover, the affordances of social media may not be optimal for facilitating attentive listening.

To reach a wider audience, Fanzingo seeks collaborations with established media. In the past, they have had several collaborations with SVT (the Swedish public broadcaster).

Mentorship Programme With *Aftonbladet*

In the context of *Young Correspondents*, Fanzingo approached *Aftonbladet*, Sweden’s largest tabloid, with a proposal for an editorial collaboration to enable the participants of *Young Correspondents* to receive feedback on their work and publish it on *Aftonbladet’s* platforms. However, as the following quote illustrates, *Aftonbladet* was not prepared to open its editorial office to Fanzingo. Instead, they suggested a mentorship programme.

Fanzingo suggested working together on an editorial project, but that’s usually quite tricky to do well. So, we ended up with a mentoring programme for our employees, who then volunteered as mentors and were paired up with Fanzingo’s network. I guess we did that partly because I’ve been on mentoring programmes before. It’s usually just as rewarding for the mentor, so we did it as a kind of development project for our employees. Yes, but also because we see, like everyone else, that the industry has a pretty big problem with poor diversity. (Editor, *Aftonbladet*, male, personal communication, April 28, 2023)

As the editor at *Aftonbladet* emphasises, editorial collaborations could be challenging. Subsequently, in the interview, he explains that *Aftonbladet* cannot permit individuals to claim affiliation with the company, as it has a brand reputation to safeguard. Furthermore, the youth may not be prepared for the potential negative

reactions they might encounter when engaging in the public sphere. Therefore, the suggestion of a mentorship programme was *Aftonbladet's* response to Fanzingo's request to collaborate. They were *receptive* to their idea of an editorial collaboration and recognised its importance, but due to organisational structures, *Aftonbladet* could not accept the offer.

Conversely, the implementation of a mentorship programme is a relatively straightforward process that does not incur high financial costs for *Aftonbladet*. Furthermore, such a programme has the potential to yield substantial benefits for both mentors and mentees. The quote also suggests that *Aftonbladet's* proposal to start a mentorship programme is partly driven by their concern regarding the lack of diversity within their workforce, which also reveals that they do *recognise* Fanzingo's importance and value. *Aftonbladet's* hiring practices undermine diversity by prioritising individuals with a proven track record and relevant educational qualifications. Apart from the mentorship programme, *Aftonbladet* does not engage with diversity work.

When discussing the mentorship programme, it was revealed that the interest in becoming a mentor surpassed that of the mentees:

there are more mentors than mentees (...). It [journalism] is not perceived as interesting for young people (...). So if you don't use the products, I understand why you don't want to work with them either. So, we need to improve in that area (...), I think that many people, or we know that many people, feel that the reporting and reflection on these areas [the suburbs] is not fair and good. (Editor, *Aftonbladet*, male, personal communication, April 28, 2023)

The decline in interest among young people in pursuing a career in journalism is partly attributable to their limited engagement with traditional news media. This lack of engagement, in turn, leads to a reluctance to engage with an area with which they have little familiarity.

The project leader at Fanzingo concurred with this viewpoint but expressed a determination to support all young people interested in journalism. It is noteworthy that the *Young Correspondents* received over 100 applications annually, whereas the mentorship programme with *Aftonbladet* struggled to find participants. Fanzingo ran another year of the mentorship programme with *Aftonbladet*, after the determination of the *Young Correspondents* project. Despite advertising in Fanzingo's channels and contacting potential candidates directly, it was difficult to find participants.

One potential contributing factor was identified by the editor of *Aftonbladet* at the conclusion of the quote. A substantial number of individuals living in suburban areas perceive *Aftonbladet's* coverage of these areas as predominantly negative. This observation merits further examination to ascertain its alignment with *Aftonbladet's* mission, focus, and journalistic principles.

One criticism we get is "you only come when something [bad] is happening" and so on. We have over 4 million people who visit us every day (...). For

example, a shooting is a major news event that affects everyone. We will always report on that, but the opening of a new leisure centre is not that kind of news. Now that shootings are spreading to other places in Sweden, even outside the vulnerable areas, I think more people will feel that way. You only come here when there is a shooting. Yes, we do. We have also worked hard to highlight positive examples, but the truth is that this type of journalism is not very popular. (Editor, *Aftonbladet*, male, personal communication, April 28, 2023)

This quote is of interest for several reasons. Primarily, it demonstrates how *Aftonbladet* perceives its role and the news it covers. As a national newspaper, *Aftonbladet* focuses on major news events, such as shootings, rather than the opening of leisure centres in the suburbs. This is not an unusual focus for a national newspaper. However, the quote also juxtaposes news and positive examples, rendering them as binary opposites, as if there is no possibility for anything in between.

Furthermore, he attempts to mitigate the perceived issue of misrepresentation of the suburbs by asserting that, in the era of widespread media coverage of shootings, a greater proportion of the Swedish population will perceive *Aftonbladet's* focus on such events as misrepresentative of their neighbourhood. However, it must be noted that the comparison between areas featured in the news due to one shooting and those subjected to prolonged and repeated media scrutiny over several decades is arguably flawed.

Despite the evident discord between their respective journalistic philosophies, Fanzingo and *Aftonbladet* collaborated on implementing the mentorship programme, underscoring the potential for cross-industry cooperation to address mutual concerns. The scope of the project also encompassed integrating local newspapers into Bonnier News Local, since several of the correspondents were not based in Stockholm.

During the programme, the mentor and mentee met monthly to deliberate on various aspects of journalism. The programme was customised through dialogue between the mentor and mentee to align with the mentee's requirements. Fanzingo had produced a manual outlining potential topics for discussion during meetings, including presenting examples of texts from both parties and discussing the mentor's career trajectory and the mentee's career aspirations.

Fanzingo asserts that the mentor programme engenders a reciprocal transformation in both mentors and mentees:

it leads to individual change. The journalist gets new perspectives from young people that they bring into the editorial office, and the young person gets access to a context and network that he/she would not otherwise have. It is also an opportunity to get support in producing our productions, and some get jobs after too. (Former CEO Fanzingo, female, personal communication, April 4, 2023)

Several mentors also view mentoring as a space for exchange, which benefits both the mentor and the mentee. The opportunity to discuss one's work and reflect on the role of journalism with young people from diverse backgrounds and experiences was highly rewarding. Furthermore, mentors highlighted that they also expanded their network through these interactions. One mentor emphasised that the key benefit of mentorship programmes is that they provide mentees with invaluable insights and knowledge that can save years in their careers. She emphasised the significance of mentorship for all young journalists, particularly those from racialised backgrounds. The quote also highlighted the necessity for Swedish media to adopt mentorship programs due to its current lack of diversity:

Swedish journalism needs this. We need to include more voices, we need to become more multifaceted and represent the Swedish population better, both in terms of who we employ as well as who we report about and who is represented in the media, and it is all connected, and that is why I continue being a mentor. (Mentor, *Aftonbladet*, female, personal communication, June 8, 2023)

The experience of the youth was found to vary; some were enthusiastic, as it provided them with an opportunity to engage in a reflective process and receive feedback on their journalistic work. Others held a positive outlook, considering it beneficial, yet expressed that their mentor could have been more *receptive* and *responsive*. The quality of the relationship between mentor and mentee is based on both parties' willingness to engage in a reciprocal dialogue.

Despite the initial concept of an editorial collaboration proving unsuccessful, several participants in *Young Correspondents* were able to have their articles published in the newspapers where their mentors were employed, for example, *Aftonbladet*, *Sydsvenskan*, and *Gefle Dagblad*. It was found that there was an increased possibility of publication in local newspapers, presumably due to their lower threshold and a more comparable journalistic mission and focus to that of Fanzingo.

Challenges: Conflicting Journalistic Ideals

The conflicting journalistic ideals and missions between *Aftonbladet* and Fanzingo identified in the previous section are a challenge to Fanzingo's mission to transform the media landscape. Most of the content produced by *Young Correspondents* and Fanzingo in general has the character of "opinion texts", characterised by a first-person perspective. The former CEO at Fanzingo describes the uniqueness of their content as: "because it's real. There is a closeness to reality. A fragility and something genuine and unpolished and straightforward in a way, no matter what subject they take on and do".

In contemporary Sweden, marked by heightened polarisation, first-person narratives, particularly on subjects rarely addressed by the media, can offer novel perspectives that foster greater mutual comprehension (Bassel, 2017). As Roger Silverstone (2006) contends, it is in stories that we seek and sometimes find the shareable meanings that create the possibility for a shared understanding of the world.

However, there is a risk that other media may label Fanzingo as advocacy journalism. This concern was highlighted by one of the *Young Correspondents*. He was simultaneously enrolled in a journalism school and emphasised that he occasionally felt compelled to insert a more impartial and objective perspective as he perceived that it often became more of “content” rather than journalism:

quite often, I was like, no, we can't do this, because it's not journalism, it's something else. And, that was because there were a lot of people working with media, and it is kind of a production company, so it's not strange (...). Yes, and there is an agenda to increase diversity, and you can do that and be impartial at the same time, but sometimes it could have a bias, I thought. And I also expressed that. (Participant, *Young Correspondents*, male, personal communication, August 28, 2023)

Consequently, there is a risk that, although other media houses are *receptive* to the aims of Fanzingo and recognise the importance of their work, they might not *recognise and value* their journalistic output as much, as it is not always perceived to follow established journalistic ideals. This could negatively influence potential collaborations with established media.

Challenges: Sustainability and Funding

The most significant challenge confronting Fanzingo is the absence of sustainability, stemming from its reliance on project funding. This lack of sustainable funding significantly impacts employees at Fanzingo, who receive lower remuneration than their private-sector counterparts. The individuals working at Fanzingo are there because of their personal conviction, which also means that they invest a lot of their own time and emotions. Since they are underfunded, it is also common for one person to serve as project leader for several projects simultaneously, some of which might not be within their speciality. Many, therefore, leave because they are burnt out, leading to high staff turnover. The low salaries and precarity of the work situation can also prevent Fanzingo from attracting the most qualified applicants.

The *Young Correspondents* project was funded by *Postkodstiftelsen* for three years and saw a variety of individuals at Fanzingo playing active roles in its execution. This involvement resulted in the imprint of each individual's unique contributions on the project and the manner in which it was conducted. The substantial resources possessed by Fanzingo derive from its extensive network, and consequently, certain individuals with strong connections become pivotal. The absence of key personnel during leave periods can result in a lack of knowledge, skills, and network connections among their successors, thereby affecting project outcomes and Fanzingo's capacity to achieve its objectives. Consequently, high staff turnover can negatively affect Fanzingo's ability to listen to and design projects that respond to individuals' needs. High staff turnover, therefore, has detrimental short-term and long-term consequences, as the establishment and execution of structures necessitates continuity.

Conclusion

The ICA model of participatory media projects that this paper has developed to examine Fanzingo's production process underscores the importance of recognising that listening is integral to the quest to give voice to marginalised groups. By operationalising the concept of "listening" in line with Dreher and de Souza (2021) as *receptivity*, *recognition* and *response*, this paper illustrates not only how listening is crucial for an inclusive production process at a media house like Fanzingo, but also how difficult it is to control listening at the final stage of the process (amplify) as it takes place outside Fanzingo and therefore, to some extent, beyond its power.

At Fanzingo, voice is both a process and a guiding value (Couldry, 2010). Fanzingo provides a secure environment for marginalised youth to find and cultivate their voice and to acquire media production and journalism skills. This process is contingent on democratic communication (Dreher, 2012), and it is only by listening to and acknowledging the youth that Fanzingo can design projects (*responses*) tailored to individual needs, which is crucial to making journalism accessible. By facilitating spaces of encounter, young people gain access to new skills, people and experiences, opening doors to new worlds. These spaces of encounter are also spaces of exchange, because listening can help both interlocutors learn new perspectives, thereby increasing understanding, as the mentoring programme with *Aftonbladet* demonstrated. Nevertheless, in the absence of any of the three components of listening, reciprocal dialogue will not be achieved.

Other media houses, such as *Aftonbladet*, are *receptive* to and *recognise* the importance of Fanzingo. Especially since *Aftonbladet* acknowledges its own challenges with diversity and difficulties in engaging young people, both as consumers and as potential employees, particularly those from marginalised and racialised suburbs. However, it has not translated into significant changes in their journalistic practices, and it is evident that the journalistic ideals between the two media organisations differ.

Fanzingo aims to serve as a pathway into journalism for marginalised youth, believing that more avenues are necessary to ensure the inclusivity and diversity of the journalism profession. However, the organisation's efforts are continually hindered and undermined by its financial constraints. It is evident that to facilitate journalism as a viable career path for marginalised youth, there is a need for greater cooperation and increased financial resources.

A potential limitation of this study is the modest yet varied sample of informants. Moreover, additional research is necessary to determine the applicability and usefulness of the ICA model in other participatory media contexts. Further research examining collaborations between participatory media and mainstream media in greater detail would contribute to a deeper understanding of unequal power relations. Furthermore, it could help identify good practices to enhance the fruitfulness of future collaborations. The notion of "mentorship" as a medium for exchange also warrants

further investigation, with particular attention to the role of listening in shaping the relationship between mentees and mentors.

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