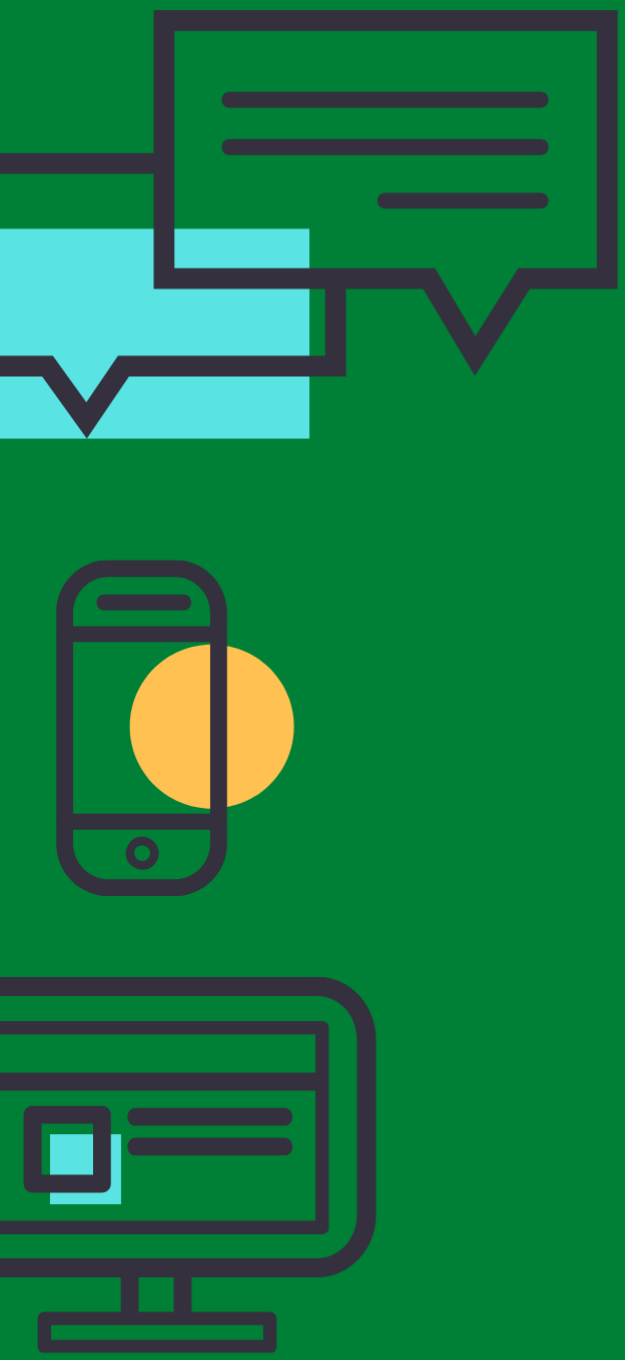

MEDIA ON ENVIRONMENT

MANUAL FOR MEDIA MAKERS

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MEDIA ON ENVIRONMENT

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1) INTRODUCTION

Media have an important role in modern societies being a main source of information for most citizens. The way of reporting and presentation of information can play an important role in the public sphere and influence political and social events, as well as shape public opinion. This is especially visible in case of topics that spark complex and sometimes polarised discussion. Environmental issues belong to this category. Moreover, it is often difficult to get all insights and then comprehensively understand all related topics, which can lead to higher proneness to manipulation and lower critical thinking about presented information and data.

This issue is twofold. Environmental topics are often targets of misinformation and various types of manipulated content. At the same time, media and online content creators are usually not covering them in an adequate way and in depth. Media and information literacy education (MIL) for media makers and online content creators is a powerful tool that for achievement of needed change: help media makers and online content creators to verify, decode, and contextualise information; think critically and be aware of different misinformation and manipulation practices; be fair, independent, and responsible, and create quality and appealing products.

This Manual for media production on environmental topics is a helpful resource, or tool, for journalists, media makers, and online content creators, but the general public as well. It provides overview and quick insights into topics that need to be focused on. Alongside the readers will explore best practices and tools to make the media products more appealing and interactive (e.g. infographics or story maps based on GIS technology).

Hence the Manual helps its readers to get competences and resources to cover environmental – and ecological – topics in an accurate, but also attractive way, think critically about information and content they receive or produce, and create quality media and online content. They shall also be able to more effectively reveal and tackle misinformation and popularise environmental and ecological topics.

Martin Maška, European Dialogue

2) FIRST THINGS FIRST

Written by Baris Dogan, Ivan Šćepanović, Arslan Yaseen, Rohit Hassan

Terminology and concepts that one should know in order to adequately understand, report and write about environmental and ecological issues are available under the following links:

Jagran Josh:
https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/basic-concepts-related-to-the-environment-and-ecology-1518784514-1

Ethics of Biodiversity Conservation: An ecological study by Jayanta Kumar Mallick:
https://books.google.cz/books?id=wr-XEAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=de&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

Class Notes on Environmental Law (Rajesh Kumar):
https://grrajeshkumar.com/class-notes-on-environmental-law-unit-i-3rd-sem-3-year-ll-b/

There it's possible to find the most relevant terminologies that one needs to be accustomed with to have a better understanding of environmental and ecological issues or challenges, for one's own awareness and in order to be able to communicate about them in an effective manner.

Let's describe a distinction between environment and ecology here. The **environment** is a system composed of natural, artificial, and social components which are or can be in constant interaction. Simply speaking, it is the surroundings of a person, animal, or plant in which they live or operate. Environment refers to everything that creates the natural conditions for the existence of organisms, including humans, and is a prerequisite for their further development. The components of the environment are mainly air, water, rocks, soil, organisms, ecosystems, and energy.

Ecology is a natural science of the environment, focusing on description, analysis, and study of relationships between organisms and their surroundings – both animate (biotic) and inanimate (abiotic) components. It is an interdisciplinary field that uses the knowledge of many scientific disciplines. It helps people understand how organisms live and interact with each other and their environment.

It is also essential to acknowledge that majority of people engaging with any kind of media content might not be aware of meaning and significance of such terminologies, therefore it is essential to use such a language which is easily understandable for all kind of audiences and ensure that the real message is obfuscated by excessive use of terminology-laden language.

Media literacy

Individuals are intensively exposed to media messages and shape their lives according to the information they receive from the media, websites, and social networks. For this reason, it has become imperative that messages from the media are filtered through a (cognitive) filter in order to be perceived correctly. In order to do this, there is a need to read the media correctly, that is, to be media literate.

Media literacy can be explained as the ability to receive, understand and evaluate the messages of media in different formats and characteristics. Media literacy provides individuals with the ability to use the media, to understand media messages correctly and to protect themselves from harmful content.

New media is a medium where there is a lot of information pollution as each user is also a distributor. In these new communication channels, which are becoming increasingly widespread and involving more and more users every day, the possibility of people being harmed has been increased. Therefore, it has become essential to ensure that individuals are not harmed by these environments.

Information literacy

In the information era, the size of information and documents has reached incredible figures. With the introduction of the Internet into our lives, access to these books and publications has also become easier, and technologies such as electronic databases and e-books eliminate the concepts of time and space in accessing resources.

When this is the case, it is as important to have conscious orientation, selectivity, critical perspective, re-access and evaluation skills to information sources as it is to have the information contained in the sources. Information literate person, in order to be able to use information effectively, requires to be able to recognize both written and visual media products, to be able to recognize the desired information to be able to find, evaluate, and choose.

Role of the media for environmental awareness is very important because it provides geographical knowledge, identification of forces affecting nature, conservation of natural resources as well as vocational information. The effect media has on people's perspective is very important, especially for the youth. Even though they don't seem as useful and reliable, memes, videos and TikTok have a really big influence on people. Social media stars and influencers can have a big impact on these topics because people feel like their opinion matters.

Examples:

- https://www.cfs.fashion/article/the-environmental-impact-of-social-media-influencers

- https://jubuk.wordpress.com/2021/10/17/youth-exchange-creating-critical-power-on-media-literacy-in-kemer-antalya-turkey-7-15-10-2021/

3) CODE OF CONDUCT

Written by Ema Jedličková, Nerina Čelam

The main task of journalism is to approach all of the received information in a responsible way. It is important to take a somewhat even more responsible approach in the area of environmental journalism, which deals with much complicated topics that are often either too distant or too scientific for a potential audience. Therefore, a journalist dedicated to environmental and ecological activities should also follow several principal rules. Those rules can be applied to the entire discipline of journalism, but specifically to the environmental part. The intention of this Code of Conduct is:

1. to establish binding rules of conduct for journalists and media creators who are committed to dealing with environmental issues.

2. to inform the public about ethical rules of environmental journalistic work.

Code of Conduct:

1. The main duty is to inform the public and raise the awareness

The environmental journalist ought to educate the public about the main or less known threats and issues of the environment. They can do so on the global, national or regional level. The main duty of the journalist is to inform the public or audience and raise awareness about ongoing environmental issues.

2. The plurality of different views ought to be maintained

It is important to provide information from more than just one point of view and to share more than just one of many opinions, therefore, the plurality of different views ought to be maintained. The journalist strives to stick to objectivity without deceiving the audience or providing insufficient information about the environmental issues. For that reason, the journalist must be not affected by their political or ideological preferences and must provide truthful information about the issue.

3. The duty of the journalist is to bring several reasonable solutions

The principal key of environmental journalism is to provide several solutions, and so it is a duty of every journalist to alert the audience and make them engaged with the environmental problems that are being addressed.

4. *Taking responsibility for one's actions and correcting previous mistakes is part of a respectable journalistic work*

If the journalist makes a mistake in one of their previous works, they must always take responsibility for their actions. As a result, they must immediately correct every false information that was published in a deceiving way.

5. The acquired information should also come from the professionals and experts in the field of environment

The journalist should be able to provide professional information for the audience from the experts or directly from the people affected by environmental changes and catastrophes. It is extremely crucial that the journalist works with more than one source, can verify it and use it effectively to their advantage.

6. Environmental journalist is obligated to follow basic moral and ethical laws

While discussing sensitive topics, the journalist must remember the basic moral and ethical laws of journalism and media production. Either making interviews or just cooperating with the victims, witnesses and participants of different environmental issues, respect and the attention must be paid to their personal space and emotional well-being. Invading someone's privacy is highly unethical and a creator shall not take an unfair advantage of a victim of environmental catastrophes.

7. Plagiarism is strongly prohibited and must be avoided

Plagiarism and stealing other already published works is strongly prohibited. If it comes to a case of such an act, the creator must be penalised. It can be avoided by honest journalistic work, meaning that all of the topics need to be investigated thoroughly, and they have to be based on good evidence.

8. The environmental journalist should acquire a specialised knowledge in the field of environmental and ecological issues

Environmental journalists need to acquire specialised knowledge about environmental issues. They should be able to analyse the several issues concerning environmental topics, and they also need to understand that environmentalism and ecology go beyond all animals and plants.

9. The corruption and bribery is forbidden

Investigational journalists are prohibited from taking gifts and money from people or the government in order to have an objective report.

10. Serve people information that is easy to understand. Avoid the oversimplification

Part of a good work is to avoid extreme scientific explanations and terms that could discourage the audience from exploring the topic more deeply. Journalism should be accessible to all members of society. However, you need to be careful not to oversimplify the topic. It can give the audience a feeling of underestimation. Excessive simplification of the text also detracts the quality of the arguments and the overall work. Environmental issues need to be approached responsibly in order to explain them to as many people as possible.

11. Specialised knowledge about the environment is recommended

Every individual working as a journalist in the field of environment should at least require some specialised knowledge related to the specific environmental topics. Understanding the topic from different points of views is important for further professional explanation and providing possible and reasonable solutions.

12. Leading a lifestyle related to the environmental topics could help to enhance the quality of a media product

A deeper understanding of a specific topic comes not only from the intensive process of gathering information, but also from the way that the media creator is actually living their own life. Lifestyle that is either similar to the issues of the environment or corresponds to the author´s work helps to make the specific topic more alive and valuable. Obviously, leading such a lifestyle is not obligatory but it is important to realise that every environmental journalist would benefit from the knowledge obtained from their own personal experiences.

Being a journalist carries both responsibility and public influence. Environmental journalism has the capability of functioning as a constructive catalyst for social and environmental changes. Simultaneously, the topics of the environment, ecology and green politics are as sensitive as other social and political topics that we encounter daily in the media. For that reason, it is extremely important to comply with these listed rules in order to avoid any unethical dissemination of information, the dissemination of misinformation or the unethical approach of the journalists themselves.

Note: Check also the Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists published by the International Federation of Journalists: https://www.ifj.org/who/rules-and-policy/global-charter-of-ethics-for-journalists.html.

4) INVESTIGATIONS WITH FOCUS ON ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

Written by Simoneta Šimková, Dumitrița Culiuc, Khrystyna Miskevych, Mariia Tril

Definitions

What is investigative journalism?

Aim of investigative journalism is to shed light on or unveil stories and matters that are concealed either deliberately or accidentally by mistake or lack of due diligence. Those matters are concealed mostly by someone holding a position of power, and in any case, there is a public interest to know about them.

Investigative journalists are analysing and exposing all relevant facts to the public – in this context, it's using many methods and tools from the field of data journalism. It also contributes to freedom of speech and expression and to actions tackling distorted information (e.g. disinformation) and hate-speech.

The matter of public interest is anything in which the public – or at least many members of the community – have an interest, because it has or can have some effect on their lives and development of society (e.g. corruption, environmental issues, public finances, media, etc.). Public interest is then defined as welfare or well-being of the public and its individual members. In the field of media, public interest is also to have an access to as diverse information, opinions, and content as possible.

What is environmental journalism?

It's a field of journalism that is focusing on events, trends, and issues associated with environment and ecology. Its methods are collection, verification, production, presentation, and distribution of relevant information and data – as such, it's again using methods and tools of data journalism. Professional environmental journalist must have an understanding of scientific language (mainly from the field of ecology) and environmental concepts and be able to translate it to language comprehensible to the general public. In other words, the results of environmental journalism need to be accurate and understandable. Environmental journalists should both have knowledge of historical environmental events and be able to follow recent developments and policy decisions.

Data journalism or data-driven journalism?

When something is **data-based**, it's using data and data sets for the purpose of creating a new piece of work. Data is at the core of this approach. When something is **data-driven**, it's using data and data sets to enhance the process and result - data is a supporting material.

For example data journalism and data-driven journalism are often used interchangeably, but there is this difference: data tell the story, or data support the story.

What is the purpose of environmental journalism?

Environmental journalism is covering topics related to nature, environment (especially the impact of human activities), and ecology with the aim to inform society, provide insights into covered topics, and raise public awareness and interest.

What issues you may face?

There are a great variety of topics where investigative and environmental journalism brings a big added value: from air pollution to agriculture, from protection of biotopes to development of cities, from corruption in the public sector to chemical emergencies,or chemical weapons.

Many environmental issues to be investigated are very complex, involving many various interest groups and several sometimes opposing factors. Common factors can include resources, management, policies, urban and landscape planning, land ownership, weather and climate, or economy. An effect or impact of a given issue or action can be at a local, regional, country, or international level.

Steps of an investigation

As mentioned above, it's important that the media coverage is accurate and in the public interest. There is no space for personal biases or editorial agenda, and it's always better to consult an editor or lawyer for advice.

General pieces of advice for conducting an investigation:

- work only facts, not assumptions
- respect presumption of innocence
- verify everything
- no personal comments
- accurate and understandable language

The rule "better safe than sorry" works here well, too. It's important to think critically about the content to be published – to avoid that it will have a bad effect on innocent people or someone will accuse the author of defamation. If someone sends a complaint about a mistake in a published piece of media, apologise and correct the mistake (if possible). Editor or lawyer can then decide on further actions.

5 steps to conduct an investigation:

- choose a story, write down **hypotheses** (what is the assumed situation) and research **questions** (which will help you find out whether the hypothesis is correct). It's not an issue if the hypothesis is proven to be wrong;
- collect and organise **documents and other evidence** (especially the primary sources, e.g. contracts, policy documents, statistics);
- find **sources** and interview them (especially the primary sources: witnesses and participants);
- **write** the story;
- **polish** your story (ask someone to check the first draft, use details and resources to create credibility).

Open source materials and primary sources are key resources for investigative journalists. Keep in mind that interviewees may want to be kept anonymous (if they are whistleblowers or victims, for example). The sources also need to be reliable and verified. At least two independent sources speaking about the same matter need to be used.

What are reliable sources of information:

- **paper sources** (various documents providing strong and verified evidence or contextual background. They provide references to other verified sources, if there are such. They are difficult to be modified, unlike human sources, whose message may change).
- **human sources** (victims, eyewitnesses, people responsible, participants, etc.)
- **digital sources** (public and private databases, media libraries, verified social media accounts, media pieces. Their reliability is increased when they include metadata – data about data, e.g. date of creation, date of modification, date of publication, author, geolocation, etc.)

Organisations that do investigations

Environmental issues are becoming more visible in the media and people try to stop the negative impact of human activities by organising a lot of training campaigns and events. Also, the investigations with focus on environment/ecology are undertaken to increase the knowledge about the existing problems and to increase the awareness of society about the ecological problems. The investigations about environment and ecology may change the behaviour of people. Only by involving people in environmental issues will they begin to think about their role in environmental management.

The organisations and the companies that carry out investigations about the environment and ecology have an important role in helping people to learn about what they can do for our Planet. Undertaking these investigations they collect data and publish them, so that people have the possibility to interpret them and start to act.

The organisations/companies that do investigations about environment	**What do they do?**
Environmental Investigation Agency	They investigate and campaign about environment crime and abuse.
The Climate Investigation Center	They monitor the individuals, corporations, trade associations, political organisations and front groups who work to delay the implementation of sound energy and environmental policies that are necessary in the face of the ongoing climate crisis. Their most important investigations are : Cooler Heads Coalition, Anti-Environmental Archives, etc.

Mannvit	Mannvit specialises in environmental investigations, measurement and research. The company offers expertise in: air quality, water quality, emissions assessment, groundwater monitoring, etc.
United Nations Environment Programme	UNEP is the global authority for the environment with programmes focused on climate, nature, pollution, sustainable development and more.
Environmental Investigative Forum: EIF	The Environmental Investigative Forum (EIF) connects experts and journalists willing to collaborate on investigative reporting on environmental issues. It expands in three main areas of activity: networking, reporting, and developing their own environmental journalism resources and services on a global scale.

Also, the news sites like The Guardian, BBC, Euronews and others have dedicated sections to the environment. They carry out investigations about climate change, environmental issues, nature, ecology, etc. In this way the society is becoming aware of the danger as media influence a lot the way of thinking of a person. The media has the power to discover hidden information even in the countries where corruption is high.

Example of environmental investigations

In this part, we would like to introduce **two** examples of environmental investigation. **The first example** is focusing on the environmental cost of corruption. It is important to introduce the environmental perspective of corruption. According to **Anti-corruption resource centre[1]:** *"Environmental crime and corruption cover activities ranging from illegal logging, illegal trade in ozone-depleting substances, dumping and illegal transport of hazardous wastes, to unreported fishing. It poses serious threats to the environment, contributing to poverty and food insecurity. Therefore, it can easily weaken the state due to organised crime activities and corruption."* (Anti-corruption resource centre, 2012). Moreover, there is a clear link between corruption and environmental problems, which is most evident in developing countries.[2]

Example: ***Environmental crime in Peru's Amazon.***

This investigation has been conducted by Insight Crime partnered with the Igarapé Institute. Igarapé Institute is an independent think tank that focuses on the areas of public, climate and digital security and its consequences for democracy. The main tools this Institute uses are research, new technologies and communication with an impact on public policies.[3]

This investigation compromises the survey of authorised logging sites, the research of the Supervisory Agency for Forest Resources and Wildlife, documents issued by the regional forestry authorities, research of the strategies of the industrial companies, as well as research of other

investigations such as Forest Peoples Programmes, public database and research of other entities that belongs especially to the Ministry of Agriculture of Peru.

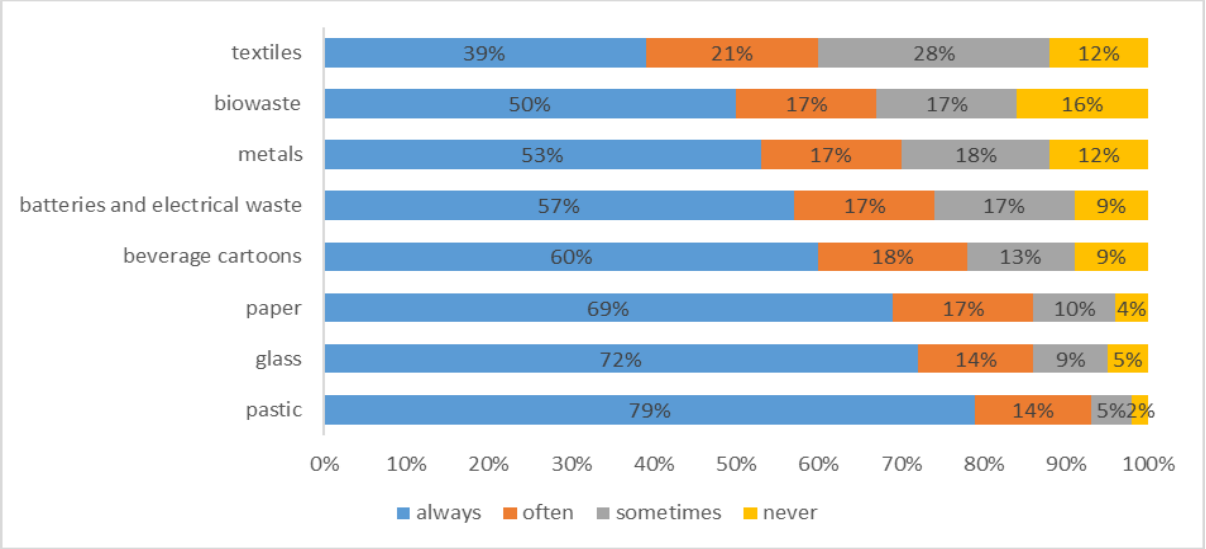
This investigation examines all the major contributors to devastation in Amazon including illegal gold miners, poor locals, companies, agribusiness subsidiaries, corrupt officials and criminal groups that thrive thanks to this destruction. The outcome of this investigation is a six-part series investigating environmental crimes such as deforestation supported by illegal logging, gold mining, coca cultivation, wildlife trafficking, cattle farms and agricultural industries.[4] The research also showed that there is little political will for protecting Peru's Amazon. Investigation showed that there is systematic corruption at every level, especially judicial authorities are often corrupt.

The second example of investigation in the field of the environment has been provided by ENVI-PAK company, which was founded in 2003 by leading manufacturers of packaged products.

Example: ***Waste sorting in Slovakia.***

Investigation reflects how the waste sorting changed from 2020 to 2022. The important part of the investigation was the data collection carried out by the research agency MNForce. The online survey was conducted in April 2022 on a sample of 1 000 respondents. (The sample is statistically representative of the Slovak population aged 18+, in terms of age, gender, education, size of location and region.)

According to the investigation, Slovaks improve in waste sorting. In this schedule, which was provided according to responses we can see how often Slovaks do waste sorting for particular types of waste.[5]



Source: OZV ENVI-PAK, april 2022, N=1000

Sources:

[1] Anti-corruption resource centrum. **Environmental crime and corruption.** 2012 [online]. Available at: https://www.u4.no/publications/environmental-crime-and-corruption [accessed 3.06.2022].

[2] Lauri Turpeinen: **The environmental cost of corruption**. 2020 [online]. Available at: https://www.agcs.allianz.com/news-and-insights/expert-risk-articles/esg-risk-briefing-3-2020.html [accessed 3.06.2022].

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[4] InSight Crime. **The Roots of Environmental Crime in the Peruvian Amazon.** 2022. [online]. Available at:https://insightcrime.org/investigations/the-roots-of-environmental-crime-in-the-peruvian-amazon%ef%bf%bc/ [accessed 3.06.2022].

[5] ENVIPAK: **Sme zamorení plastmi?** 2022 [online]. Available at: https://envipak.sk/clanok/sme-zamoreni-plastmi-dve-patiny-ludi-deklaruju-ze-plasty-tvoria-najvacsiu-zlozku-ich-domaceho-odpadu [accessed 3.06.2022].

5) USEFUL TOOLS FOR COVERAGE

Written by Suren Karapetyan, Belma Eminagić, Sofija Milović

The world is facing a lot of environmental challenges. There are many ways that we can cover these topics. A well-researched and diverse selection of tools can aid any journalist. There is an overwhelming number of tools and websites out there that can help us with researching and telling stories about the environment. The problem is finding them all. To solve this challenge, we have tested the top tools that can benefit environmental journalists on topics including climate change and environmental justice. Good news for environment journalists! Here is a list of the online tools to create and find environment and ecology related content. For the beginning, we have divided the tools into sixteen categories.

Brainstorm

- Google Docs is great for real-time collaboration with a web version and applications for Mac, iPhone and Android.
- Workflowy makes your notes easily accessible, filterable and simple to share.
- X-Mind, Groupmap and Mindly are useful brainstorming tools which are also available on mobile apps allowing you to brainstorm or make mind maps while on the go.
- Realtimeboard is exactly what it sounds like — a visual whiteboard that allows real-time collaboration where users can post comments on bullet points to add further information.
- GoMoodboard is another moodboarding tool but with a more user-friendly interface than old school moodboarding software.

Monitor a story

- Feedly, powerful feedreader.
- Nuzzel, news shared by friends & connections.
- Google Alerts, alerts based on search terms.
- Tweetdeck, an indispensable tool to monitor twitter.
- Hootsuite, monitor Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Google+, YouTube.
- Facebook Signal: surface relevant trends, photos, videos and posts from Facebook and Instagram.
- Storyful Multisearch, quickly query keywords across Twitter, YouTube, Tumblr, Instagram and Spokeo.
- IFTTT, automate actions between apps, set alerts & track stories.
- Wikiwash, monitor real-time changes on wikipedia.

People Trail

- Social Me, discover someone's social media presence.
- Rapportive, shows you everything about your contacts right inside your inbox.
- Graph.tips, experimental Facebook Graph Search Engine by
- Mentionmap, map twitter users and hashtags.
- Followerwonk, deep twitter search, compare users.

- Myne, mobile app for advanced twitter search.
- Bio is Changed, get notified when a twitter bio changes.
- Bond, schedule calls with your sources.
- Crystal, personality profiling with one-click as you browse LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook.
- Little Sis, a free database of who-knows-who at the heights of business and government.

Paper Trail

- DocumentCloud, analyse and annotate documents.
- Overview, analyse and visualise documents.
- OpenCorporates, the largest open database of companies in the world.
- Open Spending, explore, visualise and track government spending.

Location

- Banjo Discovery, discover & organise social media content by time and location.
- Geofeedia, monitor social media based on location.
- Echosec, free location based social media search.
- Yomapic, location search for Instagram and social network VKontakte.
- Newspaper Map, find and translate online newspapers.
- Flight Aware, Live Tracking Maps, Flight Status, and Airport Delays for airline flights.
- Marine Traffic, Discover information and vessel positions for vessels around the world.

Verification

- First Draft visual verification guide for photos.
- First Draft visual verification guide video.
- TinEye, reverse image search.
- Veracity App, reverse verification app.
- YouTube Dataviewer, a simple tool to extract hidden data from videos.
- Checkdesk, open source fact checking application.
- Bellingcat beginner's guide to geolocation videos.

Collect Data

- Import.io, the easiest way to scrape data from the internet.
- Web Scraper, free Chrome extension for scraping.
- Crowdata, crowdsource document investigations.
- Kobotoolbox, reliable free field surveys.
- Poll, easy online polls.
- EU-Data Tools, Set of free tools for analysing data about the EU
- Open Refine, clean your data.
- Tabula, turn PDF reports into Excel spreadsheets, CSVs, and JSON files for use in analysis and database application.

Structure your story

- Detective.io, online investigative platform.
- Casefile, map complex investigations.
- VIS, visualise investigations.
- Zotero: information management tool.

Production

- Drp.io, file hosting without a password.
- Toggle, keep track of your time.
- Camscanner, turn your phone into a scanner.
- Cloudconvert, convert anything to anything.
- Small Pdf, tools for pdf's.
- Easy Annotate, annotate pdfs.
- Google Translate App & Extension, use your camera to translate text instantly in 26 languages.

Privacy

- Hushed, temporary anonymous phone numbers.
- Telegram, encrypted messaging.
- Signal, secure calling and messaging.
- Mailvelop, encrypt your webmail.
- Redphone, secured phone conversations.
- OnionShare, open source tool for secure and anonymous file sharing.
- Disconnect.me: protect your browser from trackers and search privately.
- Spideroak: group chat & file-sharing like Slack but more secure.

Reporting

- Filmic Pro, video app with professional functions (iOS).
- Cinema FV-5, video app with professional functions (Android).
- Teleprompter, use your smartphone as a teleprompter.
- Camera+, versatile photo app (iOS).
- Camera FV-5, versatile photo app (Android).
- Interviewy, audio-recorder with transcription functions (iOS).
- Field Recorder, record interviews & voice dictation (Android).
- Sky Recorder, audio recorder for VOIP.
- O-transcribe, online transcription tool.

Multimedia Publishing

- Spicynodes, interactive concept for layered information.
- Thinglink, make interactive videos & pictures.
- Timeline.js, best timeline tool out there.
- Story Maps, interactive map and timeline tool.

- Soundcite, integrate sound in your articles.
- Tangle, make adaptive documents.

Snow Falling

- Exposure, stunning platform for picture and video stories.
- Pageflow, open-source storytelling tool for rich video and image stories.
- Shorthand social, scrollytelling optimised for social sharing.

Data Stories

- Silk, publish interactive data stories.
- Raw, easy custom data visualisations.
- Chartblocks, a versatile platform for infographics.
- Datavisual, an alternative tool for data graphics.
- Infogram, easy and stylish infographics.
- Highcharts & Highmaps, create interactive charts & maps easily for your web projects.

Analytics

- Media Impact Project, impact assessment & metrics guides for news projects.
- Google Analytics, DIY Engagement Tracking guide.

In this article, we have compiled the most useful tools available to any environmental journalist. Whether you are conducting a fact check, researching a topic in depth, or just trying to keep up on current events in your industry, these tools should prove helpful. We believe these tools will be beneficial to your reporting and writing process, but we also think they will help you present stories in a better way to your audiences.

6) BEST PRACTICES TO FOLLOW TO AVOID FOLLOW WORST PRACTICES

Written by Haykel Boutabba, Younes Saadallaoui, Diana Shahbazyan, Stela Olejárová

Common knowledge about best practices and worst practices

Media content is used by journalists and media makers to spot the light on news, update, answer questions, or even provide instructions for solving an issue, which can be also part of the research that these "creators" are doing. And this is where we are especially talking about investigative media in all their forms like articles, for example.

Media products have lots of aspects: news can be only informative, but articles can be questioning and opinionative. We can see that the various types of media are heavily consumed by the readers, listeners, or watchers. Meanwhile, multiple practices that journalists are following can be very successful in terms of coverage of certain subjects, but on the other hand, many bad practices exist and they can negatively affect either the quality of the product itself, or even the perspective of the consumer towards the materials they are exposed to and, ultimately, the whole medium and media at large.

In this chapter, we will be presenting the good methods and tools that you can use to avoid bad practices, joined with some tips that can help you create a quality product.

How to produce and write quality and effective media

We think that the most effective method of media production is to search for a real problem in a society, to search for realistic solutions to that, and to define the audience. It's important that the problem is viewed from all its aspects to give a comprehensive view to the audience. Hence it must be very specific and questions such as the following should be asked: is it for the local community or general public, is it for decision makers, or is it for partners?

It is also necessary to rely on reliable sources about the issue and to address them in support of the content, which must have a clear and specific goal (for example provide insights into the topic, help people to make qualified decisions, reveal bad practices, etc.).

We also focus on the importance of making content appealing. How? For example, by relying on storytelling, or any attractive method that makes the recipient follow to the end and make them interested in the content. Visualisations, animations, interactive presentations come handy in this context. It must not be, however, at the cost of professional quality of the content. Attractiveness of content can go hand in hand with accuracy, and your good reputation will make people more interested in your work as well.

We also point out the importance of being unique, because imitating another content creator is generally not a good idea.

Finally, we see that the last thing that can be chosen is the headline, which is the first portal the audience enters, so it is better to choose it well. In the end, before publishing, some adjustments still can be made.

How to avoid being bad media maker - tips and tricks

If you want to make your knowledge based article as friendly for your audience as possible, your main task is to create a media piece as helpful and impactful as possible.

First you need to know what a knowledge medium piece is and what form you want to use for providing your information. Knowledge based content helps you to know the problems, the product, and their impact (HelpScout).

Be prepared

Considering the quality of the content, you should be able to answer all the questions related to the topic. Read a lot, to know as much as possible about the topic and to develop an attractive writing style. Don't use abstract concepts. It's effective to use words people can visualise. If you need to use words and terms which are abstract or hard to understand, make sure to explain them by using concrete terms as well. Adding examples could also help to visualise the topic.

Ask someone to evaluate your work before it's published

Ask "an outsider" to look at your article or any other piece of medium for fresh input, to give feedback and another perspective. If someone gives you back constructive feedback, it will help you to analyse if the topic is understandable and has some impact.

Keep it clear and relevant

Make things easy to read. Write as you would speak to a friend, adjust your tone, and avoid slang.

Get to the point quickly and simply. Stick with simple titles, remember people search with basic phrases (but avoid click-bait headlines, those that only draw attention, but are not relevant or accurate).

Length

If you are writing a longer article or making a longer video, try to be more creative. Include table of contents, links, photos, animations, or other visualisations which are not distractive, and a possibility to jump from one section to another.

When you need to write a long article, it's essential not just to put a whole wall of text. Subheading and line breaks are important. Also use different types of text, for example headers, callouts, bullet points, highlights, and various types of formatting. Using (but not overusing) colour that attracts attention to critical pieces of information or bolding to highlight the interesting part you want to draw attention to are good ways to start.

Conclusion

Try to conclude the main ideas of your media piece and highlight what was the most important message delivered. Do not add any additional information, in order not to confuse the readers. You can use links to other similar articles/videos/other posts.

Critical thinking is a fashionable phrase today. But there is no consensus on what it means, where it begins, and where it ends. However, as time goes by it becomes clear that in parallel with media literacy and media ethics, this is an approach that looks deeper into communication issues.

The study of communication has been largely focused on the role of media. This approach, often called the “media model”, is usually limited to claiming that the purpose of communication is to convey information.

The year 2014 was one of the most important in recent history in this context. It brought us the Russian occupation of Crimea, the Donbas War, and Brexit, not to mention the US elections. Concepts such as "post-truth", "trolling", "fake news", or "hybrid war" have become a daily problem for large parts of the world. It was then that media literacy and critical thinking finally came and were largely acknowledged as primary, basic skills for modern humanity.

Political events are not the only ones that can change the world. In recent years, we have witnessed the development and overdevelopment of online technologies. The Internet, social media, algorithms, as well as smartphone technologies, the development of which does not seem to be marked by such clear events as the political cases mentioned above, have become, however, technological means by which the flow of information increased and, so to speak, sank the whole world. However, we can also say that technology has made it easier for people to express their opinions freely and openly.

The new historical situation changed many approaches, needs, and wisdoms of human life. It became less important to find or know information, but it’s rather vital to navigate it, to resist its influence, and to filter it.

When finalising your media piece, answering the following question would help you identify whether your content can be considered a good practice. You can also use them to evaluate other media pieces/sources and keep in mind that your audience might ask the same questions about your content.

1) The first thing to do is to critically think about the pragmatics of the text. What is the purpose of it? Is it relevant to the audience? Is the context included? What might the reader understand, feel, know and think - and what is the use of that to the author?

2) What can be the impact of the content on the audience? Do you follow values of public interest, or your own/publisher’s agenda?

3) Does your communication or approach to the topic’s coverage have cooperative-constructive features (meaning it has an open approach to sources, interviewees are seen as equals, and the author is not superficially criticising, but constructively questioning or criticising)? If yes, then it would be correct. If it meets the standards of accuracy and is not completely or partially wrong, then it’s correct. If it’s ambiguous, biassed, and includes mistakes, then it’s wrong.

4) The following are signs of a bad practice:

   Does the text in question lack some aspects of a cooperative-constructive text (reader is seen as a partner, text is constructively questioning what is happening or criticising bad practices, it’s not manipulative, and introduces potential solutions)? Does it have some manipulative features?. In particular, did you use any persuasive techniques or arguments that might have

persuaded the listener to believe in what you said? Did you simply state your opinion without any evidence or support for it?

On the other hand, the following are signs of a good practice:

Does your text invite the audience to argue with you as an author? Does your text invite the audience to open links to our look for evidence and proof of what you mentioned?

It is better to be aware of these principles and to practise them, and to follow the behaviour of professional media.

7) FINAL REMARKS: WHAT TO ALWAYS PAY ATTENTION TO

Written by Martin Maška

It's been mentioned that accuracy is very important and attractiveness of the content doesn't necessarily mean it will be superficial. Scientific text also needs to be explained or translated into text that is understandable to the general public. In this chapter you will find a summary of additional and important aspects that will help you make your media content better.

The first thing to keep in mind is that the content should **not oversimplify** though. Important terms still need to be explained, correct terms need to be used instead of synonyms or metaphors, which may give the wrong impression. In the worst case, oversimplification can lead to misinformation.

It's also important to **choose the genre** and stick to it. The line between various genres needs to be clear, especially between news and opinion pieces - blend of these two is counterproductive; everyone should know what kind of content they consume to avoid misinterpretation and spread of misinformation

One of the bad practices in current media is excessive **commercialisation**. If it happens in public service media then it's a very serious issue. Commercialisation is problematic for two reasons. First, increasing the amount of advertisement makes the media more dependent on private companies and the economic interests of others.

Second, especially now in the era of social media, there is a risk that journalists would promote themselves to get more followers and earn more money through advertisement. They might forget it's the topic, not the reporter, that should be in the focus of the media piece. Therefore, journalists promoting themselves is not a bad phenomenon as such, unless it's having a negative impact on the quality of their work. In the best case journalists create their "personal brand" which is based on their professional approach to work and not just their appearance in front of the camera. In the worst case they just become "talking heads" providing only simple messages.

The approach, which helps make media better and more trustworthy, is called **social responsibility of media**. It means the authors of media content are critically thinking about and considering various effects that the published materials may have on the public. They are feeling responsibility towards the audience and ultimately the whole society. This approach also supports independence of media and broad public discussion about their role and content.

It should not be confused with a corporate social responsibility (CSR) and it also isn't a self-censorship (which means the author is not publishing something at all). It's additional to journalistic ethics, but is not fully codified, even though it's a bit embodied in codes of ethics and media councils.

Nowadays, this approach can also help ensure digital safety of the audience (secure websites and tools) and empower people to be resistant to disinformation and harmful content (through media products and learning opportunities).