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Cover picture by Paul Hills

The startling psychedelic graffiti on the cover and on this page were photographed by Paul Hills in Bogota, Colombia, when he encountered streetscapes like this one below. See his story and more pictures on pages 52-54.



IN THIS ISSUE

This edition of *Rhodes Journalism Review* is timed for the annual Highway Africa conference, Africa's biggest gathering of journalists, happening this year in Cape Town in September, and which takes as its focus one of humankind's biggest challenges and one which should preoccupy journalists too – our impact on the Earth (see Harold Gess' guest editorial below). At the same time media activists and journalists from all over the continent gather for the Pan African Conference on Access to Information to take stock of not only media freedom but also how deep democracy is rooted in Africa, a test taken by judging just how much its citizens can know. It's 20 years after the Windhoek Declaration, and Guy Berger, convenor of the event, asks whether Africa can do it again and get a day declared "World Access to Information Day" (see his guest editorial on the next page, and see the section on Media Freedom, starting on page 67).

The theme for this edition of *Review* is "Have you got your mojo?" – or "Have you got your mo(bile) jo(urnalism) [sorted out]?" Not many people thought the ubiquitous cellphone would confront journalism with such a powerful test of its adaptability (and survival skills), or change the relationship between makers and receivers of media so radically. So we asked those using its tools and theorising about this interface to give us the benefit of their insights. JM Ledgard, *The Economist's* correspondent in Kenya, talks about how mobile works in Africa, Julie Posetti challenges us that the audience is no longer who we thought they were, and Chris Kabwato and Alette Schoon show us the personal and social dimensions of an internet connection. Then Matthew Eltringham, Matthew Trench and Robert Brand, who

all work on this frontier, tell us how they do it. Carlo Angerer and Adam Haupt take up the issue of making digital media products pay the bills (and the shareholders) and pose the very important question of journalism's old relationship with free information and whether monetising communication risks shutting down the very commons the profession has always relied upon.

But as Robert Brand remarks (page 17) there is still an important essence to journalism, regardless of its new tools/toys, and so we focus an entire section on Doing Journalism. Kim Gurney looks at the Murdoch empire and phone-tapping and Brett Lock interrogates WikiLeaks. Arts journalism battles along because, despite its audiences and their appreciation, somewhere someone with power believes it to be uneconomical. John Hogg, Mary Corrigan, Suzy Bell, Gayle Edmunds, Sean O'Toole and Phakama Mbonambi urge us to hold the faith. Harry Dugmore and Mia Malan, who've started a new course in health journalism, look at ethics and Aids. Then two new experiments: Paul Hills and Laurence Mazure team up with indigenous communicators in Colombia to do both research and journalism, and Media Monitoring Africa puts child reporters into the field.

As Tripoli falls, we pay tribute to Anton Hammerl, another photographer lost in a war, and John Rose unpacks what's going on in North Africa. We look again at how mobile technologies are implicated in all this change and focus on Al Jazeera and their very interesting reporting methods.

Hein Marais, journalist turned author and sharp analyst gives us the Last Word on moving from the literal (daily journalism) to the lateral (writing a book).

ANTHEA GARMAN, EDITOR

CAN JOURNALISM ADAPT?

BY HAROLD GESS

There has been much discussion in the last decade about the crisis facing journalism, with speculation as to how to adapt journalism to a communication world dominated by the internet and social media, yet perhaps the biggest challenge to journalism will be whether it can adapt to climate change.

This might seem an odd claim but it is one that bears contemplation.

Conventional journalism, and even more so up-to-the-instant internet-based journalism, relies heavily on phenomena or events whose coverage can be encapsulated within small or short allotted spaces. It is very poor at dealing with complex ongoing phenomena that develop gradually over a considerable period of time.

Climate change stories, as with many other social-ecological stories, are often challenging to journalism in that they are complex and ongoing with a slow chain of events. Sometimes there are no visible personalities involved and nothing dramatic takes place.

As readers, viewers, and listeners have been challenged by ever-growing amounts of information (quantity replacing quality?), the technological changes to journalism have tended towards supporting short information bites rather than in-depth investigation, but this is, ironically, the complete opposite evolution to that which is necessary to adapt it to effective reporting in an age of climate change.

Climate change was, at first, framed as a scientific issue and, to date, much of the coverage it has received has been about scientific theories and predictions, but it is very much also a social issue. It is a phenomenon with wide-ranging and inter-linked social, economic, political, and environmental causes and consequences.

As the effects of climate change become more severe, it will generate more stories around economic and political decision-making, water security, food security, energy security, disease, political instability, economic instability, human migration and war.

The complexities of a changing world are often reduced

by journalism to local or isolated events, reported without any apparent understanding of, or linking to, the complexities from which they result. This is exacerbated by the perceived need for up-to-the-moment reporting, leaving little time, space or appetite for in-depth analysis.

Some players see the possible redemption of journalism in the evolution of the multi-skilled, all-singing-dancing creature called convergence; one individual who can shoot and edit video, photographs, and audio and who can also write copy. While juggling all these technical skills, and producing a journalistic product in ever-decreasing amounts of time, there is little time for in-depth research or analysis.

Others point to the citizen journalists snapping images and video on cellular phones and adding their 50 cents via sms or Twitter and believe that the redemption lies in letting the public make their own media while the journalists collate it. Once again, this is a recipe for more information about the hyper-local with little or no depth of understanding.

The only beneficiaries of these two methods are the media companies and their investors who have fewer staff salaries to pay and all the other associated costs. They do a disservice to both the journalistic profession and to the public who rely on it for knowledge and understanding of an increasingly complex and challenging world.

There is no way to make climate change sexy: it never appears on the red carpet in a skimpy frock. It won't often be exciting, except when its events are framed as (un)natural disaster. There will be a lot of challenging developments that cannot be easily understood without greater analysis of 'the bigger picture'.

The challenge for journalism, if it is to have any real value going forward, is to find a way to draw together and make sense of the complex, interlinked issues of climate change for readers, viewers and listeners.

One cannot adapt to new challenges unless one knows they exist and understands what they mean. This applies as much to journalism itself as it does to the readers, viewers and listeners who depend on it to understand the changing world they live in.