

In their contribution to the *International Journal of Communication* 6 (2012) Bregtje van der Haak, Michael Parks and Manuel Castells ask why journalism is in a crisis. Journalists feel that competition increased while it is also said that the willingness to pay for content declined. Instead of the usual emphasis on the drop in profitability of media corporations the authors stress the role of journalism as a public good. The three think it is “sad to see many journalists close the door to new technological opportunities and refuse generous offers of active citizens.” The authors then provide an overview of new tools and practices in networked journalism such as ‘crowd-gathering’ of news and other use of ‘user-generated content’. On the level of data visualization there is a lot happening and the same can be said of web documentaries and other forms of ‘visual journalism’. Networked journalism, the authors conclude, “is not a threat to the independence and quality, but a liberation from strict corporate control.”

In response to this optimistic emphasis on tools and their possibilities we can ask why journalists have turned conservative and protective concerning the methods used in their profession. The technological possibilities, which are clearly out there, remain, by and large, unused and circulate mostly as demo design, media art works and prototypes on the edge of the media sphere, on temporary display in cultural contexts such as festivals and exhibitions. The answer why this is case cannot be found in some hidden agenda of a bunch of Luddites, these backward-looking executives that are caught in the 20th century. The new tools need both space and time to develop—and these are precisely the rarest commodities. In order to reinvent itself journalism has to first of all free itself of the real-time paradigm. The news industry is still caught in the rat race of live reporting (from CNN to Twitter). This machine is surrounded by an ever-growing parasitic cloud of PR and communication advisers who forgot to distinguish between content and advertisement ages ago.

If network journalism wants to explore the tools that are out there it needs to first of all take back time (through stretching and decompressing). We cannot lament the decrease of investigative journalism and continue our presence on Facebook. Slow food may be a passion, but so should be slow media. And as Peter Sloterdijk describes it well, the way to get there is through daily exercise, in analogy to physical training in sports. That’s our new culture of information, one that is not merely technical. And once we are bored with real-time status updates, we will soon enough access other forms of knowledge (narrative, visual, political). The question here is one of

critical mass. How can we kick-start the demolition of the attention economy?