

25th ISOJ Influencers content creators and journalists: What can they learn from each other?

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 - **Sam Ellis**, creator and showrunner, **Search Party**
 - **Salla-Rosa Leinonen**, producer, **Yle Kioski, Finland**
 - **Hugo Travers**, journalist and content creator, **Hugo Décrypte, France**
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Adeline Hulin [00:00:02] Good morning, everyone, and welcome to this panel session, which I think is going to be very exciting. We will discuss the interconnection between journalism and digital news content creation, and we will explore how digital content creation is transforming the journalism landscape and how content creator and journalists can learn from each other. And to discuss that, we have the best speakers you could imagine. We have two journalists that have switched to digital content creation. And on the other side, we have two digital content creators/YouTubers that are doing journalism. And I will introduce them to you in a second. But before that, I just want to say a few more words about this session. As Summer said when she introduced me, I'm working for UNESCO. I'm the head of information literacy, and one of the reason why I'm here is that, okay, apart from the fact that I really wanted to be part of this, conference for the first time, is the fact that we have embarked with, Austin and the Knight Journalism Center on a really incredible project, which is to develop a massive online course for digital news content creators and journalists to foster the exchanges between the these two categories of actors and see what they can learn from each other's. We see more and more journalists and content, more and more journalists that are becoming content creators and that are creating their own social media channels. And at the same time, we see an increasing number of content creators that focus on news reporting. And that gets a much bigger outreach than some traditional media outlet. There are many reasons to explain that phenomenon. And we've discussed that. We've heard that already yesterday in some of the panel discussion. But one of the reason is that people are increasingly looking for a personalization of information. A recent survey of the Financial Times called Next Generation News 2030, shows that news consumer placed greater emphasis on the personal relation or the affinity of the person, that has produced or disseminate the information in order to evaluate the trustworthiness, of an information. So one question I have here today is what can we learn from content creators in terms of building trust with an audience through an engaging format? Proximity with the community, personalized content. But at the same time, what can and what should content creators learn about the responsibilities that come with having a wide outreach? And in particular, what can they learn from the professional standards of the media profession? So let me introduce our speaker. We have Salla-Rosa Leinonen. She is a producer, storyteller and social media professional from Finland. Interesting for our conversation today, she actually works for the Finnish broadcasting company Yle. She's currently working as a producer for Yle Kioski where she's responsible for the society and news focused teams creating content on social media. For early drama, she produced a web series for young audiences. We have also Sam Ellis. He's a journalist, director, editor and animator based in New York City. From 2016 to 2023, he was a senior producer at Vox Video. He was producing the hugely popular video series Vox Atlas, for which he earned an Emmy nomination. After that, she's moved to social media and content creation. He is currently the creator and showrunner of Search Party, an independent video journalism project that investigates and decodes the most important and complicated news around geopolitics and global sports in an accessible and engaging visual style. Search Party has gained more than 330,000

subscribers in its first seven months of creation. We now also have María Paulina Baena. She's a Colombian journalist and political scientist who moved from traditional media to social media. She's co-creator and presenter of La Pulla, an opinion program of the newspaper and a spectator that today has 1.35 million subscribers on YouTube. She's the winner of the Simon Bolivar Prize for journalism, and listed as one of the five best young journalists in the world by the One Young World Organization in England. And last but not least, we have Hugo Travers. Hugo is the founder of Hugo Décrypte, a French media startup that delivers news largely aimed at young audiences. Hugo started eight years ago, a university students YouTube channel. Today he has 14 million followers across his social media accounts. 200 million monthly views on TikTok and another 35 million views on YouTube. Hugo Décrypte Instagram account has more followers than Le Monde, and his daily news update is the most downloaded postcodes in the country. Hugo hosted nearly all the candidates running for presidency in 2022, in France and also President Macron. And he has just launched his own media channel. So welcome to the four of you. And maybe a round of applause. And we will start with the presentation of Salla-Rosa, please. The floor is yours.

Salla-Rosa Leinonen [00:06:38] Hi everyone. My name is Salla-Rosa, and I'm super happy to be here. I just realized that I have a wrong date on my slide. So sorry about that. It's 13, I would say. But anyways, I'm here to talk about, how social media influencers are reshaping, media landscape. And, we know that social media influencers have a huge impact on our media lives, especially younger audiences, spent most of their daily lives on social media and especially, like influencers, have a huge impact on their lives. Just the practical question. Yes. Thank you. And, of course, when we are on these social platforms as journalists, we are competing basically with the same audiences. As these social media influencers. And that is why, of course, we should be interested in what kind of impacts, social media influencers, on what kind of power social media influencers hold. And also social media influencers deal with similar topics than journalists do. So that is also, a very important point that, how can we as journalists do it as interestingly as social media influencers do. I'm sorry, I don't know. This is not working. Well thank you and sorry about that. So, that is, the reason why I ask can journalists be influencers? So, I did a fellowship at the LSE Polis, a media thinktank, of London School of Economics. And, I wrote a paper, about what can we learn from influencers as journalists? And, I also tried to define kind of an arch type of so-called, journalist influencer as well. So I wanted to find out through research what kind of power does influencers hold, and of course, learn what kind of ways of giving the information we could take into account when we do our journalism. I'm pointing out some main findings of the research paper. But if you want to learn more, of course. Go and read the paper. This is published in 2022, so it's already two years old, but it's very relevant still. Journalists often speak from authority from like up to down in a way, while influencers, speak more kind of a friend like they are more approachable or they feel more approachable than journalists usually do, especially like if we think of traditional journalism and they also bring like more, closer connections with the followers. I wanted to also, find out, like, through what kind of research information we have on, what kind of power influencers hold. So, of course, the kind of known, kind of very obvious. One is that influencers can recommend things that people want to buy, but also influencers, according to one research, influencers can make people seek more information, which is, of course, a great thing. A Finnish research highlights that if you kind of mix political content with lifestyle content, it can bring more attention to the political content, which is kind of like a genre mix, I would say. So this is also a way of kind of how they can emphasize, political content within to like the more like lifestyle content. So should journalists be as authentic as influencers are? And I want us to also find out what people are actually expecting, from influencers. So according to one research, they there are still like these kind of very

dominant, kind of ideas of what is real journalism or what is a real journalists, but still quite a lot of these, expectations towards journalists and content creators weren't quite the same. So there were there was a need for authenticity, transparency, genuine engagement, a promise of quality content. And it is like coming. Well paced and it is consistently consistent. Also, these are findings from different research papers, that I wanted to point out what kind of things people are actually expecting from influencers. And I think you can as journalists, you can look at this list, in a way that what can I take in my journalism when I do it on social platforms, for example, can I be more personal? Can I be more relatable, for example? All of this. This you can of course, find from the paper if you want to look at more in detail. I also wanted to see, what kind of different things? Kind of, what makes, influencers and, journalists the same in a way, from audience's point of view and what makes them very different. And I was looking at this question, through these five questions. So how the employment and the income differ from different kind of creators on social media platforms? What are the aims for the content creation? What kind of rules or guidelines do these creators follow? How well the content creation is planned? And who benefits from the content creation? I defined different categories of different kinds of content creation creators on social media. And, this is just a list or kind of a graph to show, that there are like various different kind of content creators on social media platforms and actually like, to point out there are like social media activists, influencers, journalists influencers and traditional journalists as I defined them. But in the end, when you think about all of these different creators on social media platforms, from the audience's point of view. I skipped one. From the audience's point of view. Actually, these different creators are quite the same. So basically, what are different, what the biggest differences are that, what kind of rules and guidelines do they follow, where they get their income. But these are things that most of the followers or the audience wouldn't know, because if it's not disclosed in the content. So I think that it's very important to understand that all of these kind of different content creators on social media platforms, on the audience's point of view, don't really look that different. I try to sum up what I mean when I'm talking about journalists influencers. So it has a or they have a personality driven style. They have a deep understanding of their target audience. They specialize or have a very special expertise in something. They have a unique tone of voice. They are very approachable. And they are present to their followers. Some things that content creation usually has is that they are interactive, responsive, relevant to the followers. They plan like familiar things and also do innovative things. They empower their followers, being present with them and communicating with them. They adopt trends and also make some bold choices. Of course, we have the clear issue here that many, editorial guidelines, for example, clash with the social media platforms, different guidelines. These rules are of course, making many traditional media outlets back away from, from social media platforms. But, do we really have time, from the audience's point of view, to wait for a certain legislation or guidelines when there is such a massive need for reliable information on social media platforms, especially for the younger audiences, and I would like to end up in a note, to think what kind of democracy are we looking at later if journalistic media is not present on social media platforms? Thank you.

Adeline Hulin [00:17:11] Thank you so much Salla-Rosa this was the perfect introduction to many of the questions we're having in relation to content creators, new content creators and journalists. So now, I'll give the floor to Sam, to go more deep dive in the concrete example. So, Sam, do you want to stay here?

Sam Ellis [00:17:33] I'll just do it quickly right here. I just wanted to take a few minutes to introduce myself and my work a little more. I'm super thrilled to be on this panel in particular, because, I'm actually currently transitioning from a more traditional journalist

company to a more independent content creator role. So I was at Vox for about seven years. I ran a YouTube series there called Vox Atlas. I also did a number of TV shows there last summer, though I left Vox and teamed up with a friend of mine and former colleague Jonny Harris, who is a successful YouTube journalist in his own right. And we launched a new channel called Search Party. And Search Party is an independent YouTube channel. It covers a spectrum between geopolitics and sports. And so I've learned a lot over the last seven months about the differences between the two. And two things come to mind at first when I think about it. The first is pace, independent content creators, journalists just need to create a lot more, a lot faster. It's been an adjustment for me, to put that in perspective, when I was at Vox, I had about 4 to 6 weeks to do a video. So enough time to do thorough journalism to take on big topics. At Search Party, we try and publish about every 3 to 4 weeks. So, close to half the time. And that's even slow for YouTube. And so I've learned a lot about workflow efficiency. But there is a trade off there. And I think that does change a lot about the journalism that I do. But the other thing I think about when going independent is the kind of coverage you can do. So, as I mentioned, Search Party covers this spectrum between geopolitics and sports. Our sweet spot, though, is a story that's in the middle. So, you know, something like how Saudi Arabia is using sports, hosting sports events to further their geopolitical goals. I think that's pretty cool. I think if that that beat in a, in a traditional journalist company might be a weird fit. But for a YouTube channel, it works really well. It's it's unique enough that I think people, are interested in and they subscribe to it. But again, that spectrum, is broad enough that I think we will, can attract a larger subscriber base than if we were to be singular topic. So, this is just a little bit of my work. But yeah, the main thing is, how do you go from a traditional journalists, model to this independent scrappier style while trying to keep the journalism the same? And so I'm excited to learn from my fellow panelists about how to do that.

Adeline Hulin [00:20:13] Well, thank you, Sam. And maybe before, we go to the story of the others, I will ask you just a few additional questions, if you don't mind. You speak about the pace and how fast for you. This is one of the main change. How then does this, you know, like, affect the standards? Like, because you have an education or you have been working as a journalist. So do you stay or do you adhere to some standards, professional standards? How is your, you know, relation in relation to that?

Sam Ellis [00:20:43] Yeah, I mean I, I remain committed to the journalism the tactics that I learned at Vox. I think the best example is that, the pace affects the kind of topics we can cover. A good example is, is the, the war in Gaza. So when that started, we were a geopolitical channel. The thing to do would have been to explain the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But I only have 3 or 4 weeks to do a video. So for me, can I do that responsibly? For me it was it's a big task. So instead what we did was we try and find smaller angles to the stories. So we ended up doing a story explaining, how the Arab governments have been normalizing with Israel and how this puts them in a bind. So that's kind of a good example of how, the times constraints were put in, actually, and just pushes us to do different kinds of topics, but that allows us to remain responsible in our journalism.

Adeline Hulin [00:21:44] And the follow up question we've seen in the presentation of Salla-Rosa, she lists about, you know, like how what people are expecting from digital news content creator or from content creators. What do you think about that? Like do you have like, do you have a personal relation with your audience, or how do you explain that you've been able to build such a big audience in such a short period of time?

Sam Ellis [00:22:08] Yeah. I mean, one of the main things, when I worked at Vox, I didn't have to appear on camera. You know, Vox was the brand people trusted Vox. It's a very

successful YouTube channel. But when you're independent, people really do need a connection to you. And so we have found ways that I call it like, I PR, around the edges of the video. So, during the credits, I make announcements. We always try and add a scene in the middle that explains, how I designed the motion graphics. That's going to help you understand the story. So I think the transparency is super, super important. Without it, you really can't build a base. You know, we use the community tab on YouTube a lot. And that's just to remind people that we're around, that we're working. And I think it does, it's important to show the work that you're doing. Most people don't know what journalism takes, what design takes. And so in a way, it's been more work, but it's been fun to kind of show people behind the curtain of how these, how we put together our videos. And it's a benefit for us as well.

Adeline Hulin [00:23:15] You've mentioned as well now your relation or the algorithm because you speak about the personalization. But what's your relation with the algorithm? Had you were you know, how do you this must be also another important part of your work.

Sam Ellis [00:23:29] It's it is trial and error to a degree. I've made videos that I was sure are going to do great, and they don't. And I've done videos that I wasn't sure if they're going to do great and they really take off. For us, the best thing we can do for the algorithm, I believe, is just keep up the pace. It seems that if you take a break for too long, and then you publish, we notice a difference in views. So it's important that we stick to the schedule, keep up the pace to kind of train that algorithm that like, we're around, we're publishing. And that's kind of the best we can do.

Adeline Hulin [00:24:02] But you're training the algorithm. But how did you learn that? Is this like a skill that you've had?

Sam Ellis [00:24:07] I mean, I think the beautiful thing about short form video digital journalism and why I'm so grateful that I worked at Vox is just I've had so many reps. You know, I did 100 videos at Vox at least. If I worked in traditional documentary, ten years would be, you know, a dozen projects maybe. So just the repetitions of being able to do a story every month for 7 or 8 years, you just kind of you learn what works. And we've tried to take that to Search Party.

Adeline Hulin [00:24:35] Thanks. Maybe. One last question and a tip because we have an audience. I think a lot of journalists. So what aspect of digital content creation could be used to improve journalism today?

Sam Ellis [00:24:47] I mean, I do think it is the transparency. I mentioned you have to be transparent to build an audience. But I also think in this era where where trust may be declining and in traditional journalist institutes, it's important for us to show people that we are doing the journalism what it takes so that the viewer sees the difference between us and others. And so, it's a blessing and a curse to go on camera and show people, you know, what you do. But, I think, I think it's really important, and I think it's, I think it's a blessing.

Adeline Hulin [00:25:21] Thank you so much, Sam. So I will go now to María Paulina. Let me start with this question. How do you see yourself now that you're again, like you've been a journalist and now you you're you like you're on YouTube. Are you journalist? YouTuber? How do you define yourself?

María Paulina Baena [00:25:47] Okay. So, so nice to be here. So. Thank you. All of you. I am from Colombia. I define myself as a journalist. I have dedicated myself, like, for the past decade to do journalism, and I join a national newspaper that's called The Spectator. That is the oldest Colombian newspaper. And there I started as an investigative journalist. Then I moved to cover environmental issues and health issues. And later I co-created this video column that is a very popular satirical video column in Colombia that's called La Pulla, and it provides news to young audiences and to young people. Today, La Pulla has 1.3 million subscribers. And, I quit it one year ago, but La Pulla is still running and it is still having a lot of views and followers and discussions. Last year I played, leading role in in a play that I wrote, and I was engaged in all these that recall thing and move. And it was very, very nice. So and the play talks about like a lot of, political aspects in Colombia, and cruel aspects of our reality. Right? That is police brutality, like the gender gap, the social inequalities in our country. So all in the context of a presidential election. So when I created all this continent and now I'm doing a podcast that has to do with history and with humor. So, when you ask me that, I don't really know where to put myself. Yeah. So I'm a journalist, I'm a content creator and both and, I don't really care, and I don't think people cares if I'm a journalist or a content creator, right? The thing is that I have an audience to whom I'm talking with. Right. So so I think, in my bases, of course, I'm a journalist. And deep inside myself, I feel like journalist. But, the thing is that I create a lot of content too and that I learn from both landscapes what's important in this whole era of, having an audience and have something to say to that audience. Right. So at the end, I think that what La Pullaa taught me is that you can make viral content with rigorous research. And I don't know if I answer your question, but, both.

Adeline Hulin [00:28:55] Know you did. You did. And of course, I could ask you now because you're doing onstage journalism or performance journalism. But I want to ask you about the switch from the traditional media to, you took to social media. What has been this main change, what has brought you? What was the trigger of, you know, switching?

María Paulina Baena [00:29:16] Yeah. So the thing is that we never moved from from the newspaper or for the read the news to this YouTube world. We were part of a 130 year old newspaper, and we were YouTubers there in the newspaper. So that's a strange thing, but that makes a huge difference too, because people believes in La Pulla and, believes in us because, we were part of that newspaper, right? And a very recognized newspaper in Colombia. And what we did, I think, was to reinterpret the values of El Espectador, because El Espectador has done suicidal battles. You know, in Colombia, El Espectador was bombed in the 80s by a drug cartel, by the Medellin Cartel. El Espectador was, one of the, directors was called Marcano was murdered back in the 80s to buy the same cards. Lambeth Palace got, El Espectador software as an economical gag because he it criticizes, a big economical emporium and what this, economical emporium did to the newspaper was that it suffocated its it financially. Right. So all these to say that we were the same old but different and we were like, just making the same journalism that they spectator used to, used to do all these years old this 130 years. So the different thing and the game changer for me was like the packaging of, of what we did right, or the format and the form. So it's a it's a matter of form, but the form is essentially the substance of what we were, what we were talking about.

Adeline Hulin [00:31:23] And it's a great, perfect transition because I wanted to ask you exactly about how do you choose, like how do you choose what format or the content you are creating?

María Paulina Baena [00:31:32] Okay. So, yeah. Wait that I have these questions here on my notes. Because switching in for English is not is not an easy thing I can say. So. Wait a second. Wait wait wait. Yeah. Your question is about the format, right? And how do we, did this thing and all these. And I think it has to do with and, and it relates a lot where you both were saying about that. You have to personalize the content and you have to be there, like putting your face in front of a camera because people has to relate to someone and that makes you accountable to. So when you put your face in your camera and you start talking with your audience, your audience start to love or hate someone there. But, you start making it, making the information transparent, right? And you start to being accountable to your audience. So La Pulla, I think is emotional, driven, you know, like a like the emotion. What we make with our format is that we start thinking what emotion arises from what I'm looking in my country. Right. So what's the emotion that pops up when I read that in Colombia, a social leader is murdered every two days. So what's the emotion? When I read in the news in my country that a woman every hour is a victim of violence, what is the emotion that arises when our health system, for example, that is the discussion that we have nowadays, today in Colombia, is going to collapse or or it isn't going to collapse. So what are there, the emotions that arises there. So it is rage. It is. I'm mad at that. Or maybe I'm confused. So if the emotion is rage, well, we criticize that and we make an argument on that. Right? And most important, we put the accent on the things that really matter in our country. And if it's confusion, for example, with all these health issues, well, let's explain and understand and, make it clear for us first and then to the audience. So the point is that we make, journalism emotional. Yeah. And probably this breaks, the laws of journalism, of neutrality, of seriousness, because we inject a little bit of freshness and spontaneity to our content. But this makes that we take sides in a story and make a point. And this makes us to don't be unfair with our audience too, and what we see there. So so again, the format was emotional driven, but it was also a matter of form, because another thing is that our scripts could be put in a column in the newspaper. You can read them as a column, and normal columnists can do that. Right. But the thing and the change here was that people can get mad with me, too. Yeah. And can relate to that emotion. And that's a thing of the format, I think.

Adeline Hulin [00:35:31] Yeah, well, that brings me to the. I think I have maybe just one minute to ask you this last question, because you speak about the audience reaction. So and that's another big question I have, is you work in an environment where you have, in comparison to traditional media, to deal much more directly with harmful content and for instance, hate speech. So how do you deal with that?

María Paulina Baena [00:35:54] Okay. So yeah. I have never felt so much sexism and so much misogynistic. You said that. misogynistic attacks from people. As when I started doing La Pulla. And, surprisingly, I live in a macho country where where a woman cannot speak out loud and not speak about politics and, cannot have an opinion on something, right? So obviously it was hard like to endure all these comments and, and all the hostility of politicians and their supporters and the lawsuits that came by and the intimidations of the powerful and, you know, like all these organized attacks in the media. Right. But, we wanted to be in the center of the discussion to we don't want to be in the margins of the discussion. And that's why former President Juan Manuel Santos, answered to us and responded to us in a video. That's why, current president Gustavo Petro, mentioned us when he gave a speech in a public park. And we were very critical to him. Right. And we are so were featured by the count, by the Congress in order for them to make informed decisions through our videos. So, honestly, I don't have, like, like, a method in which I could answer to those attacks, and any mechanism to moderate or to respond. But and, and it's sad because I have I have to resist and my team has to have to resist to those

attacks. But, what was in our mind was like, we have to keep doing this because I'm not going to spend time answering people and answering the attackers on the bomber and the and the bots. So, sadly, in Latin America, you don't have a team that can take care of the mental health of a group of journalists. You don't have that right. You just have to do your work. And the work includes being attacked. And it's sad, it's sad because because, it's like you live with that and that's it. But, I have no problem blocking people. And I didn't engage with with platforms too. I just, don't want to to have my time is spent doing that. So at some point I think people will get bored if you don't answer them. But it's sad and it's a reality.

Adeline Hulin [00:39:03] Thank you. Paulina. Thank you. So Hugo, your turn. I wanted to start with you and with a quote of CNN in a recent reporting they did about you. They started the article that way, and I quote, "he may not think himself as a journalist, but he could be the most popular one in France." Do you agree with that sentence?

Hugo Travers [00:39:36] I don't know. Well, first of all, thank you very much for the invitation. It's a real pleasure to be to be here. I don't know. Probably not. But what's interesting here is, of course, this big question, which is journalists have always been asking me this question, like, ever since I started the channel. Like, are you a journalist? Are you a YouTube? And be very precise at the beginning of the channel, usually journalists weren't asking. They were basically saying, you're not a journalist. And they were like saying you're doing content on YouTube. You can't do journalism on YouTube. That's not journalism. And you follow up with this, we've got today a team of 25 people and about 13 journalists full time working with me, and we wanted press cards for our team of journalists. And so we had to see, that the office dealing with press cards in France. And we were like, hey, we have this YouTube channel, this media, we want press cards. And they were like, yeah, but like, you don't have websites. So how can you be a media? Yeah. You're doing stuff on Instagram. You're doing stuff on YouTube, but you don't have a website, so you're probably not a media. So you had to create, fake websites and send them a fake website. And they were like, look, now we have, like, basically they like transcripts of our YouTube videos on the websites. And we're like, look, now we're media. And then now the journalists, our journalists have press cards. So yeah, it's cool. So yeah, it's a very difficult question. And I feel like we had this discussion two days ago all or all together. And I was like, I feel as a journalist, I also feel as a content creator. I grew up like when I launched my channel, I was 18 years old. I was following other YouTubers doing content about like history, science, sports, whatever. And I was like, I am passionate about like politics. I want to do journalism. I'll just create a YouTube channel and I'll define myself at the beginning as a YouTuber, because I just love those content creators and what they're doing. So yeah, it's probably somewhere in the middle.

Adeline Hulin [00:41:52] But you mentioned the press card story and about the fact of creating your website. What is it all about it? The press card was a website for you or is there also something maybe in relation to, you know, professional practices? How do you relate to that?

Hugo Travers [00:42:09] Like honestly that was the only thing missing because then once we got this, everything went so fast and we managed to get those those press cards. What's interesting is, for example, the fact of having a press card didn't change anything to the way we were working. Honestly, like, it didn't change much also to our possibilities. We'd like to do our work like the only times we had problems and we needed a press card was like doing, I don't know, protests in Paris where like you had policemen saying like, are you a journalist? And we were like, yes, but no, but yes. I'm like, so now, at least with

the press card, it's a bit easier and we're able to, you know, do our work a bit easier. But like the rest of the stuff we've been doing, like, you know, when we interviewed Emmanuel Macron. So the French president's first time in 2019, we didn't have any press card, but they still were okay to do an interview so and that's I think you was saying it earlier. I think our public doesn't they don't care really. I think as long as our work is serious and you have like those ethics and just like this journalist journalistic ethics, I don't think like people care if we define as YouTubers or content creators or journalists, what they want is reliable news sources. And just to finish with this, like one thing I think is, like the name of the channel is called Hugo Décrypte. So there's like my name in the channel, but at the same time it's not, it's not really about me. Like people know nothing about my personal life. I never share anything about my personal life or, like, even like my personal public, like, opinion about politics or stuff. So, like, I am the face of the media, but at the same time, it's not about me really. And also today we've got like other journalists presenting content on the channel itself. And that's not a problem for people following the channel like they see me and they see other journalists on the media and they're like, yeah, I mean, now today Hugo Décrypte is a media with like several people working on it. And there's no difference, like in terms of views, audience engagements, like there's no difference at all between content I do and content produced by other people. So that's interesting because I feel like it means that the format is more important than the personification. And so if the format is good, that also means like a traditional media going online can create something valuable if the format is good itself and works.

Adeline Hulin [00:44:51] So, yeah, you just spoke about the fact that you don't disclose anything very personal. And so that's not the secret of your success, but still you have achieved something that most media would dream about. So, I mean, you have a magic recipe here. How do you explain that?

Hugo Travers [00:45:11] I mean, it's not easy to say. I think, there's like, work. There's also like, I think like the the fact of being here at the right time, like being on YouTube, in 2015 when so many media were going on Facebook and I was like, I'm not going on Facebook anymore, like, why would I launch a Facebook page? Like, I'll just do stuff on YouTube because I feel like this is where things are happening. Same thing, like in 2020 when we launched on TikTok, I was like, yeah, TikTok in 2020 is like, dances and challenges and like stupid stuff usually. But it can also be a platform for news, like there's no reason why this wouldn't be a good platform for news, of course. Like there's all those questions about the algorithm about like, risks of censorship and stuff, like all those, you know, real things. But at the same time, we've seen, like, we've got 6 million followers on, on TikTok. Would you like about a billion views a year on TikTok? And I've seen how this has opened the media to a younger audience in the, you know, like 13, 14, 15 years olds who didn't follow news and politics before and now get engaged with with all this. So, so one is like being open to those social media and go on them and try stuff here. Second is, it's not only a question of format, it's not only a question of being on, you know, social media doing, formats that work on those social media. It's also an approach in terms of writing, like the reason I launched the YouTube channel at the beginning in 2015 was because I was studying political science and I was really interested into politics. I would like open like a switch on a TV channel, like a news TV channel. And like, honestly, I didn't understand much of it. I was like, that was like a political debate. And I was like, what are they talking about? Like there was like a, I don't know, news about at the time, there was like, of course, the civil war in Syria I honestly knew, didn't know much about this conflict. I would like switch on the TV channel. We would have like experts like, you know, history, like experts like talking about it. I was like they were saying, as you know. So in 2003, this happened, and I was like, no, I don't know, like, you have to explain those things. And so

I'm talking about this because I feel like it's not just a question of formats. It's also a question of, you know, writing and the scripts and like how do you approach those topics so they're understandable and accessible for a younger audience, not only in fact in the younger audience, but like people who want to get to understand those topics.

Adeline Hulin [00:47:57] I have maybe two questions, because you speak about the young audience and in fact, which is very interesting in your case, is that we tend to think that younger audience wants entertaining topics. But in fact, in your case, it's very serious. So how do you explain that?

Hugo Travers [00:48:16] And like, what's funny is at the beginning of the channel, I used to put like jokes and stuff in the video, like in every video idea on YouTube. And people were like, I mean, don't do this. They were like literally saying, yeah, you don't need to put jokes in your in your videos. So I don't know if I wasn't funny or just that they didn't care about the jokes, but I mean, this happened and people like we're following you for news, so just like bring us news. And I found that really interesting because and same thing. You know, if I started like posting about my personal life on the, on the account, people would be like, I mean, we don't care. Like I would completely understand like people follow the accounts to follow news. And so I feel like that was interesting to shape. Like, yeah, the content we we produce I'm sorry, I forgot the question. What is what was the question?

Adeline Hulin [00:49:09] How, why is it so you know, the seriousness like for the youth.

Hugo Travers [00:49:14] So that's was one interesting lesson. Second interesting lesson is the fact that young people they are interested in, you know, like international conflicts, geopolitics I'm sure like you guys also can see it's like they interested in those serious topics and the idea, you know, and the fact of saying like, oh, it's young people and it's social media. So it has to be fun and, you know, some like you have to talk about entertainment and stuff that's like not true. I mean, you can talk about those topics, but like, they are many other topics that are really interesting for young people. And the whole question there is not the topics. Again, it's the way you approach those topics and you make them accessible. And this, you know, interesting for this public. And so what we try to do is what I often say is we try and make, some interesting topics sexy for this audience. Sometimes you have some entertaining topics we will cover and like, try to have an interesting approach of like, analysis and like, try to understand things behind. And sometimes, like we want to talk about this conflict happening, happening in the other side of the world, and we want to make it accessible and interesting for this young audience. Yeah.

Adeline Hulin [00:50:34] One last question. Hugo, what's going next then? You've achieved already so much. Do you still have some dream?

Hugo Travers [00:50:42] Oh yeah. I'm so sure I have some. I mean, I've always when I was young, like I wanted to do journalism, I wanted to. Yeah. Like, in fact do what I'm doing today. So honestly, like, I feel extremely grateful and happy to do what I'm doing here today. What I didn't really expect at the beginning of the channel was the fact, I mean, when I launched the channel, I was beginning also my studies at the same time. I was 18 years old. I was like, who knows? Like maybe one day I be able to make it my daily job and like work on this channel. But what I didn't expect is the fact of being able to have a team with me. Like, again, 25 people today, working every day on all those videos on stuff we're doing on all social media. I didn't also expect that this would open us to other types of formats, other types of things. Like for the past year or so, for example, we've

been doing interviews. So of politicians, of course we did Emmanuel Macron, again a few months ago, but also like cultural, figures, I say. So we did Zendaya and Timothée Chalamet a few weeks ago, Hugh Jackman, Christopher Nolan, like some some of those personalities. And at the beginning, I didn't want to do those things. I was like, that's maybe not the most interesting, but like by doing it, I'm like, that's so, so valuable because we're able with them to like, talk about so much interesting topics and sometimes even politics, but like with a different approach. And then now basically what we're doing is working on the building other media brands beyond, you got equipped. So we launched, for example, two weeks ago, media brands about, helping young people get into, professional life. So it's like loads of tapes, loads of, like, presentation of jobs you could do, like some jobs with, which are not known at all helping young people with like tax payments, like all those things. Like when you enter like professional life, you have to deal one day. And so yeah, we're working on different formats documentaries too now. So, we did like a documentary in Ukraine, a year and a half ago. We building one more of those long forms. And so, yeah, we're really happy to work on this.

Adeline Hulin [00:53:02] A lot of projects. Thank you so much. So I think we still have a bit of time, I have actually a lot of questions from the audience, but I wanted to start the discussion here with the four of you and actually just with the the title of this panel. So what can they learn from each other, content creators and journalists? Who wants to start?

Sam Ellis [00:53:40] I mean, as I said before, like, pace of video is something I think that content creators and journalists can learn from each other. I've always thought that, you know, journalists have always been content creators. They're just bound by this common set of rules and procedures. So I really do think anyone can wake up and do journalism for a day. And as Hugo mentioned, like, what matters is the format that that's presented in. And so I've learned, in my career from journalists about those rules and ethics, but I've also learned from really talented artists about visual language and about a creative way to present those ideas. So, I think that there is a lot that people can learn from each other. And, and the faster pace that independent creators need to create at, is just a parameter for you to be more creative about the stories that you cover.

Salla-Rosa Leinonen [00:54:37] I would say that, transparency is something that is super, super important, like, content creators usually are or influencers are super transparent on what they do, how they work. I think journalists have a lot to learn about that, so that people would actually know about how they source information, where the information is coming from, from, for example, like really, really basic stuff. But if the people would know more about that, I think it would make it more trustworthy, for example.

María Paulina Baena [00:55:12] I think that, something that we can learn from, from journalism and content creator, content creation is that, the lines are blurred, and that's something that's useful in a way that you can make out of content something great and new and passionate and different from one you are used to do in journalism. Right. So I think that, first, you can translate complex issues into a simple language. And it was something that you were saying, and it's like a journalist, like take for granted that they are understandable to the audience. So you have to make it more understandable. And that's something that I think, content creation like, it's learning from for us and also that you can speak passionately about the topics that make you like, feel something, right. And that's something that that was not allowed when I was doing journalism like bridge it with journalism. So yeah, I think that something that has me that has taught me is that you can speak out loud of the things that make you mad, and that because living in my country, for example, hurts. And, I'm not going to say that in a, in a very lower voice. So, so I think that

rage and emotions are elements that you can take from creator content into a journalistic project.

Hugo Travers [00:57:03] I'd say journalists can probably learn from content creators, how to adapt to, like, this really fast evolving, you know, social media. And that is, like, so important. And I feel like, I mean, it seems obvious today, but like, and content creators, because it's a smaller teams or sometimes even just one person, their way more able to, you know, understand those things, spend some time on it and test and learn on those platforms. So that's why the things you always could learn from content creators. On the other hand, like we're working with the national TV in France, they like the broadcasting, the interviews of, like actors and people, that we're doing on our channel, too. There's like, the interviews I love doing this year because they're again so, so interesting to do. And I'm learning so much, from, like, working with them. Like, honestly, they're not only broadcasting this, like, broadcasting with us, this program, they're also working with us on like how to build such, you know, interviews and stuff. And I feel like we've got so many things to learn as content creators from those journalists. I mean, content creators, online content creators, they didn't invent content creation. They didn't invent journalistic content creation. They've been, you know, for thousands of years, you know, traditional media building like amazing pieces, amazing reports and stuff. And so I feel like building those bridges just helps. Everyone helps journalism, I think, as a whole. And so, yeah, we have to keep pushing those, those links together.

Adeline Hulin [00:58:40] Thank you. I have a question of Jonathan. I think for the three of you, you were on YouTube, and he said, how do you feel the changes to YouTube's algorithm? The second part of the question is how dependent on search are you for your views?

Sam Ellis [00:59:02] I mean, I'm probably more dependent on search because we're new. And so, I think, I mean, one of the main differences I noticed between working at Vox and working at Search Party is, at Vox I could do very niche topics in a way, or even, evergreen topics that weren't necessarily tied to breaking news. Vox had 11 million subscribers, so pretty much anything was going to do very, very well. At Search Party, when we're small, I could do the best video I've ever made. And if it's not that relevant, it's probably not going to get to the top of anyone's search. So we have focused on doing stories, that are going to be that the algorithm is going to like at any given moment. We think about relevancy a lot more than I did at Vox. But I do have a lot of stories, that are not relevant at this moment, that I keep kind of on ice for the day that I can do them.

Adeline Hulin [00:59:55] Thanks. One of you want to also respond to that question?

María Paulina Baena [00:59:58] No, I basically I don't understand the algorithm, but I work with it and play with it too. Right. And start like exploring if this title works and if this thumbnail works. And that was something that we were discussing, on Tuesday that is like, probably some video that is, death like Cain comes back to life when you change the title or something. So it's a matter of exploring it. And, it's something that you have to try and try and, if YouTube hides your video or Facebook does it, or, Instagram censor you. Well, how do you deal with that, too? So how do you put it in another platform, or how do you, start a conversation with your audience in other ways? So, so yeah, I that's.

Adeline Hulin [01:01:00] It's what you do? You put it on another platform if it's censored?

María Paulina Baena [01:01:03] Yeah. Or I change sometimes the words or I, rephrase them, I don't know.

Adeline Hulin [01:01:13] How about Hugo?

Hugo Travers [01:01:14] Yeah, it's really a sword. So you have to test and learn. That's the obvious thing. Like, there's no. I mean, it keeps changing it. Sometimes you don't understand it itself, so you just have to test and learn every time. That's when the fact of having a regular, you know, publishing, like rhythm is helps, too. And it's, I think, like our relationship with, algorithms is kind of like, love and hate relationship, basically, because to be very honest, like, let's say, for example, we're talking about TikTok earlier, but even like YouTube, TikTok, we arrived on TikTok and the it's the algorithm that's allowed us to bring our content to millions of people, millions of young people who now follow news via our platform. I was, you know, when I started the channel, I was 18 years old. I had no money to push ads and, like, you know, show show other people, my work. The only way for my work to get discovered was the algorithm. And the algorithm helped a lot, because. Yeah, sure. I was, like, trying to understand it. Like, then it was getting pushed and pushed, and so this helped me build my audience. So that's the love side of the relationship. The hate side, of course, is the fact that you don't have any clear walls. Sometimes things work. You don't understand why sometimes you've worked a whole year on a documentary and it gets like so little views on the like, why is that? And in the stats, the analytics seems good. So like what's happening sometimes you've got like sensitive topics which, you don't know if they're censored, if they're just limited, if they're just demonetized, if it's a mixture of all of this and it's on any platform one. So you have to understand, you know, ways to tweak the algorithm and, you know, do as if there's no sensitive topic you're covering. So it's not easy. But I think you that's just part of, what's happening on, on social media. And you have to work with it every day. Yeah.

Adeline Hulin [01:03:19] Let me ask another question, which comes from Sida, I think Sida, which for me resonates very much because I work on media information literacy. And she asks, without proper media and information literacy, is it healthy to allow an army of young YouTuber to create content?

Hugo Travers [01:03:41] I can answer this. So I'd say, first of all, it'll happen anyway. I mean, there's no way internet is like this platform where anyone can create content, and so that's just a fact and it won't change. And and I don't think it should change. I think it's good to have everyone like being able to publish stuff. Of course then I mean, anyone can publish. And when you say anyone, it is anyone. That's why I think the answer to this is basically education. And I mean, that's what she's saying. Or he or she is saying it, saying here is education is the key to all of this. You know, we were saying I think he was saying it earlier, like, the audience doesn't care if it's a journalist or if it's a content creator, or if it's an influencer or if it's a politician. That's a fact, like, and when you're on the show, on a, on whatever platform you are, like, there's not written like he's a journalist or he's got a press card or he's a politician. Like sometimes not politicians, at least in France, creating content, sometimes as if they are journalists, as if they are content creators. So this thing is, like, completely blurred and, like, not very clear today. And the only answer to this has to be I think it's not censorship, because I think censorship wouldn't help anything. Like it's so difficult. Like, so would my channel be censored because I started as a YouTuber with this guy? I mean, that's impossible to do, and I don't think it's something you we wish at all, but like, you just need education and everyone needs to ask themselves, like, who is speaking? Why are they speaking? Why are they publishing this content? And yeah, I think education is is the key.

Sam Ellis [01:05:27] And I would just say, I think that that gives us the responsibility of those to show what journalism we're doing. If someone young wants to do what Hugo does, it'd be great if Hugo showed them this is what journalism is. So that they do that if you know they're not going to do what they they don't know or they're not going to do what they can't see. So I think it adds more responsibility for us, to show what journalism is and the work that we do.

Salla-Rosa Leinonen [01:05:54] Yeah. And I would say that, it's an important question for journalists like to think that whose responsibility is to kind of, learn or teach media literacy and, that how could we involve in our country? Like, how could it be involved in our content in some ways? I think also, like I said earlier, transparency is very important, but still, like I totally agree, we already are in the situation that all kinds of content creators are their politicians or, or influencers, whatever. They are there already. So I think we just kind of have to, we have to just think about what we can do better as journalists.

Hugo Travers [01:06:38] And that's also something like we often hear, you know, when social media arrives more than like ten years ago, I don't know now, like we heard people saying, oh, so now we don't need journalists anymore. That means anyone can post, you know, and cover news and post stuff. And so journalism will disappear and media won't be useful anymore and everything. So of course, like they are some economical problems on like, real, you know, problems that you know, traditional media facing by shifting to this online model and that's a real thing. But at the same time, like, like we need journalism and we need media, whatever the form, more than ever, because that's where you see so many also disinformation, fake news and stuff happening. And so you need those media to be online, to be on those social media and to do this work to sort of counter attack. Yeah. Whether it's fake news or like stuff that might be happening on social media.

María Paulina Baena [01:07:38] Yeah. And I think that the audience is not dumb. You know, like, the audience can recognize that, who is part from which media and even though the media is in a huge crisis and people is not trusting media companies anymore. Well, I think that it's better to have a journalist from the New York Times saying that and people is going to be there, like believing in the New York Times, even though they have, like certain questions or in Columbia media as well. But, you have people knows where the information comes from to and knows where to pick like or who to believe even though they have like some questions on the margins.

Adeline Hulin [01:08:27] Thank you. I think we have just very few minutes left. I want to end with a very short question to each of you that we got from the audience. So who are the content creators that you are following for inspiration? Who should we learn from? It's a hard question to. Yeah. Who are the content creators that you are following for inspiration?

Hugo Travers [01:08:56] I would say. I mean, I know my source of inspiration was your work, honestly. Like what you're doing at Vox, what you're doing even now, and what you're doing also with Johnny Harris and everything, like, and you said it's like you're you started in a traditional media. It's an online media. It's still like a traditional media doing like content creation. That and journalists journalism on YouTube like no one did before. Like, I know, like when Vox emerged in, United States a few years ago when I launched my channel, I was like, if I want, they can do like, even like 10% of what Vox is doing. That's like a huge achievement for me. So, I feel like that's why the so you're you're like a good reference. I do have to speak to that to see what he's doing.

Sam Ellis [01:09:50] I'll cheat and say another Vox creator, Phil Edwards. He left Vox a few months ago, but he probably is doing the journalist content creator influencer thing. In a better degree than I am. He has become the center of gravity of his videos. He is someone that people look up to. He appears on camera in a very effective way. And I just think he's striking that balance so, so, so well, and. Yeah, his name is Phil Edwards, and I really love his work.

Salla-Rosa Leinonen [01:10:23] Well, I would say, a UK journalist, Sophia Smith Gaiter. She was one of the first ones I interviewed for my paper. What I did, and I think, she has, like, all of kind of these, archetype, qualities that I would think that is like a journalist influencer. She has a very special, unique tone of voice and niche that she covers, I think, yeah, she's great. And she's also quite a lot like giving, and training people nowadays, like how to become like a content creator. And, she used to work for the BBC, but she left, BBC because she couldn't do, like, the web, the journalism that she would want to do so. And then she worked for Vice, and now she's a freelancer. So yeah, that's my.

María Paulina Baena [01:11:16] Yeah. No. For me, Vox also was her reference, the fan mode. But, I was a huge fan of what John Oliver does, and it was a reference for us. I still recommend La Pulla because he has no political agenda, and it's like a very trustworthy media. And I would say Samantha Bee, I like here a lot. But yeah, a lot of other YouTubers there.

Adeline Hulin [01:11:51] Well, thank you to the four of you for your time and for answering all of these questions. Really big round of applause and that was great. And I think we need to now go to the next session. So thank you.