



# innovating journalism structures and processes

media labs, innovation teams, methods and beyond

FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN MEDIA MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

**Associate Professor John Mills**

Media Innovation Studio, University of Central Lancashire

**Adjunct Professor Ana Cecília Bisso Nunes**

Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS)

Former PhD candidate at University of Beira Interior (UBI)

**Professor Eduardo Campos Pellanda**

Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS)

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# 01: executive summary

Since receiving funding in 2019, this project investigated innovation practices within the news industry; identifying their strengths and limitations and creating usable research data and tools to have a tangible impact on solving the challenges journalism faces.

With the support of the first ever European Media Management's (emma) collaborative research grant, researchers from Europe and Latin America united to explicitly answer the question: what innovation processes and structures are emerging from news media publishers, and how is their efficacy judged?

Adopting a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative perspectives, the team reviewed previous research projects, designed and conducted workshops with journalism innovators and media lab leaders, developed a set of 68 innovation cards, interviewed five funders and 14 news media practitioners and consultants, all to explore a central theme for the news innovation.

More than presenting these data, the three-year investigation resulted in:

- a 6-stage maturity model for news innovation to assess, manage and cultivate innovation: a new tool based on factors as actors involved & leadership, strategy, innovation perception & culture, process and performance management.
- a workshop methodology to envision journalism innovation structures: with a digital template for virtual facilitation and instructions along with cards for face-to-face experiences, released to the community.
- a news innovation website: with methods pack, resources, papers published, research project history and findings, along with additional materials.
- a range of academic and industry publications: over the course of the project, we have published in Journals, books, spoken at conferences, embedded our findings to under-graduate and post-graduate curricula, produced industry reports and submitted evidence to a UK Parliamentary enquiry into the future of journalism.

By exploring innovation methods, processes and roles within news media organisations across Europe and Latin America, the team considered the wider ecosystem, investigating a sample of media innovation funders to better understand their role approaches and impact.

## Research aims:

- To investigate innovation practices within the news industry
- To identify strengths and limitations,
- To create usable research data and tools to have a tangible impact on solving the challenges of journalism

## Newsrooms innovation

Our top-level findings include:

### PEOPLE

- Innovation teams - as a physical or conceptual structure - were used to catalyse innovation within organisations
- Innovation (and product) managers are utilised to 'make innovation happen'
- Interdisciplinary teams are purposefully created and deployed to 'innovate'. These teams can be permanent or temporary convened around a project goal
- Hiring of external bespoke skills were required to meet the requirements of innovation projects and goals.
- Journalists working with innovation are demanded to learn and develop new skills.
- Beyond technology and hard skills, active listening, mobilising people, empathy and communication are central characteristics of innovation practitioners, who have also to be able to embrace change.

### METHODS

- Product thinking and product development was a focus of innovation
- User-centred approaches sprints and responding to analytic data emerged from the data
- 'Rapid' or 'accelerated' innovation methods were present, but were not seen as a panacea. These methods included design sprints, hackathons and others
- Metrics span audience reach, product launch, cultural 'presence', strategic alignment
- Audience needs are incorporated into the innovation process
- Strategic development tools, such as 'three horizons', used to give longer term purpose and direction, although this was seen in a minority of organisations
- In emergent levels of journalism innovation, innovation champions are key to spread and structure process in the organisation

## FUNCTIONS: PATHWAYS TO THE GOALS

- Scanning, scouting and measuring: innovation processes and structures are designed to look beyond the norm, exploring new tools, skills, technologies and approaches, and measuring their effectiveness
- Executing ideas: innovation processes and structures are primarily configured to executing concepts, processes, products and technologies and...
- Learning and failing: a key cultural difference was that innovation processes, individuals and teams were mandated to test, but also fail. A key outcome was learning
- Aligning with strategic aims: in publishers with higher levels of innovation maturity, structures, processes and people were identified as being aligned. They were conscious of, overall organisation aims, vision and direction

## MOTIVATIONS

- A range of motivations were identified throughout the project, these included journalistic and social values, diversity of ideas and skills, democratic and public interest, business sustainability and the creation of impactful journalism

## BARRIERS

- Inter-team communication - ensuring that relevant knowledge and skills from within and beyond the organisation were absorbed into the innovation process
- physical and mental space, funding, and time away from pressures of delivery and to think about the future without endangering current commitments.
- time, people and funds are key and overlapping requirements for news innovation to emerge.
- Innovation activities are orientated to overarching commercial strategy and journalistic values
- Much innovation is immediate and 'short-term'. A minority of publishers embed a longer-term perspective on research and development

## MANAGEMENT AND OUTPUTS:

- Outputs are not always strictly defined within a new product, tool or process. Improving an existing solution and dealing/reacting to challenges of digital economy such as engaging or finding new audiences is a common goal for emergent innovation structures
- Performance indicators can be defined product by product, especially in early stages of innovation structures
- Innovation news products are still divided between 'journalism' and business metrics, but innovation demands a more holistic approach.

## FUNDERS

- Most funders focus on 'innovative journalism' and less so on 'journalism innovation'
- Focus on social impact of media (as independent media, disinformation and civic media) features as prioritized topics
- Innovation is not explicitly addressed in most cases, even though it is indirectly related to their missions
- Some funders are becoming increasingly aware of human-centred measures within applications; a number are adopting them themselves
- Strengthening and building resilience within funded cohorts is key
- Creating incubation and acceleration structures are a popular path
- Defining and measuring performance indicators are challenging
- Understanding impact is even more challenging



## PROJECT CONCLUSION

Our findings point towards a diversity of structures and processes throughout the sample we examined. Constant themes that emerged in all context were not structural or process-driven, but instead:

Innovation is **PEOPLE**: dedicated and multidisciplinary skills, knowledge, agency and remit were identified throughout the ecosystem. Individuals with specific mandates to innovate, catalyse innovation were explicitly active

Innovation is **SOCIAL**: Connections, networks and collaborations within organisations and beyond organisations

Innovation increasingly **MATURE**: when viewed over a longer timescale, the findings demonstrate that innovation activities demonstrating ongoing maturity. Markers for this include strategic alignment, processes, methods, measurement and a sense that innovators, teams and networks have track records of trying, failing, succeeding, iterating and learning from the process. This ensures an informed, and potentially more effective, decision making and action

We would like to thank emma and the research grant funder. Without their investment and support, our collaborative efforts would not have been possible. We hope our investigation benefits both academia and industry in the path of creating new (and better) futures for news and journalism.

The background of the page is filled with several thick, overlapping, wavy lines in various shades of pink and magenta. These lines flow across the page, creating a sense of movement and depth. The word "HELLO" is centered horizontally and partially overlaid by these lines.

**HELLO**

# 02: introduction

Innovation has been a critical topic for news media especially after digital disruption. Competition, fragmentation, and attention spreading caused concerning sustainability issues for the journalism industry. Our project sought to understand how innovation - in news publishers located in Europe and Latin America - was being created, structured, processed, executed and measured. This report documents the investigation's steps, its rationale, processes, insights and results. It addresses insights around newsroom organisation: how innovation processes are being embedded into news media publishers; leadership and organisational structure in exploring innovation constructs; and assessing how publishers perceive innovation processes and their efficacy. Finally, it creates insights around entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial activities in news media, but with a specific process-based approach.

Early chapters outline background and formative work that underpins this project, as well as some of the key reasons why we collaborated as a project team. Later, we also present further process and methods that comprised our activities.

With the Covid-19 pandemic right in the middle of our investigation, not everything followed according to our initial plan. Learning and adaptation was needed and took us to a greater level of learning and results: innovation is not a linear path, rather a tortuous way into the new.

## **Innovating journalism: what innovation processes and structures are emerging from news media publishers?**

Digital natives, legacy media, and journalism innovators around the world are experimenting with a range of strategies to develop an innovation culture without endangering today's revenues in order to overcome the challenges of the digital age.

Innovation methods within news media span innovation units, labs, open innovation and hacks as well as dedicated teams working along with product managers using

methods such as design sprints, agile or lean development. In a plethora of options, those addressing innovation strategies in journalism are dispersed around the different choices one can make.

This investigation generates insights around a critical challenge for journalism: how to manage (and catalyse) innovation and understand how impactful new approaches are. A key area of focus for the research team before the project started was media labs. All members were involved with this theme either by academic research or professional practice, acting as media labs members themselves.

For instance, research by Nunes (2020)<sup>1</sup> demonstrated these were a growing phenomenon: of 123 active labs that were mapped, more than 85% of were established from 2007, and 67% of them between 2011 and 2018. Mills and Wagemans (2021)<sup>2</sup> also explored the multifaceted nature of the media lab concept across academia, legacy media and independent structures, identifying that its many forms and functions revealed a complex and nuanced picture of a media innovation landscape.

This independent but common background generated new questions and common interests around news innovation, that the partners coalesced around, as such: what practice, actors, challenges encourage media innovation in and beyond media labs?; what other actors influence the innovation ecosystem beyond a lab construct?; What are the impacts of media innovation to respond to journalism challenges?

Even though the group have collaborated before, the release of first European Media Management's (emma) collaborative research grant motivated them to create a new and original proposal to advance advance scientific media management research, with practical value for news media organisations around the topic of news innovation, with an international and wider perspective involving three different academic institutions (two in Europe and one in Latin America).

<sup>1</sup>Nunes, A. C. B. (2020). O que é inovação em mídia e jornalismo?: uma análise de Media Labs e seus projetos.

<sup>2</sup>Mills, J., & Wagemans, A. (2021). Media labs: Constructing journalism laboratories, innovating the future: How journalism is catalysing its future processes, products and people. *Convergence*, 27(5), 1462-1487.

# Desires

new audiences

Profitability  
⇕  
new business

Culture  
Change

MANAGEMENT

Attracting  
Gen Z (Gen Y)

Savings/  
Surviving

NEW PRODUCT  
&  
IDEAS

UNDERSTANDING  
AND ADAPTING  
CHANGES IN BE  
AND NEEDS

facilitate public  
debate in new  
ways

GET INTO  
NEW MARKETS

RETENTION

BUSINESS  
VALUE

Tools for thinking

GET GROUPS

MOVE INTO  
NEW FIELDS  
AND ENGAGE WITH  
NEW USERS

Move Beyond  
Media To  
Adjacent Markets

\$

Economic  
need

ENABLE  
& TRAIN  
PEOPLE

TO BE RELEVANT  
FOR THE SOCIETY  
OF THE FUTURE

NEW TYPES  
OF VALUE  
/ PRODUCTS

CREATING  
ADDED VALUE  
FOR CUSTOMERS

DRIVING  
ENGAGEMENT  
THROUGH  
AMBIENT DISPLAYS

Transdisciplinary  
Collaboration

TO UNDERSTAND  
THE FAST CHANGING  
SOCIETY

NEW DIRECT  
AND INDIRECT  
INCOME  
SOURCES

IMPACT

Finding the new  
in the existing  
rather than just  
new from  
somewhere else

DEDICATED

WINNING  
BUSINESS

Leverage the  
learn-lessons of  
versions to  
maintain and improve  
AZ

CONTINUOUSLY  
UPDATE &  
OPTIMIZE  
PRODUCTS &  
FORMATS

SUSTAINABILITY



# 03. backgrounds

## Media Innovation Studio, University of Central Lancashire (UCLan), United Kingdom

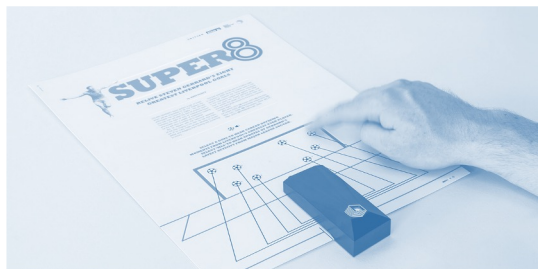
Since 2012, researchers at UCLan's Media Innovation Studio have been exploring innovation and news media at hyperlocal, local, regional, national and international levels. Using a range of methods they bridge traditional and action research. For the last ten years, John Mills has explored the internet of things, wearables, media labs and their formation, role and function within a range of media contexts. He was involved in the creation of the World Association of News Publishers' Global Alliance for Media Innovation, which seeks to unite media labs, legacy media, start-ups and academics to enable a community of practice and collaborative work.

## Department of Communication and Arts, University of Beira Interior (UBI), Portugal

Founded in 1979, the University of Beira Interior (UBI) is a young public university in Portugal and a member of the UNITA Consortium, which comprises six European mountain universities. Dr. João Canavilhas, an Associate Professor at UBI and a researcher at Labcom.IFP - Communication, Philosophy and Humanities, was part of the original team due to his research relationship with another team member. Ana Cecília B. Nunes was UBI's PhD student by the time of the call, based in Portugal, with a thesis on media labs and journalism innovation, and Dr. João was one of her advisors. By now, Dr. Ana Cecília B. Nunes has been researching experimental innovation units and journalist innovation for more than 7 years, with a Brazilian honourable mention for her work on this topic. In this project, she had a double role, representing both UBI (Portugal) and PUCRS (Brazil), as her PhD was a joint degree between both institutions.

## UBILAB - Research Laboratory in Mobility and Media Convergence, Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS), Brazil

Founded in 2011, Ubilab is a lab that explores the connections between technologies and people in communication on the move and their different screens and views. The context of media ubiquity makes it possible to understand not only how always-on communication impacts today's society, but also new forms of immersion in augmented reality and virtual reality provide new experiences of human/environment interaction. Dr. Eduardo Pellanda founded the lab with the goal to bridge scientific research and practical knowledge around media and has a proven record of academic and industry cooperation in southern Brazil. Dr. Ana Cecília B. Nunes is also an associated researcher of the lab, being involved with investigations since the beginning. Her work on media labs and journalism innovation was built upon strong connections with European institutions (UBI and WAN-IFRA).



# Challenges

RESSOURCES

Culture

Lack of funding

MINDSET &  
FEELING OF NECESSITY

Resistance  
change

PROCESSES  
AND FACILITATING  
ROOM FOR INNOVATION  
WHEN FOCUS ON BOTTOM  
LINE

Resources  
Human  
Capital

POLITICS

TRADITION

-sighted  
ion only

Resources  
- PEOPLE  
- FUND

Feeling of  
necessity of value  
from outcome

BUREAUCRACY

MON  
GUAGE AND  
METHODS

Long term  
Research  
engagement  
PhD

Time allocation

OWNERSHIP

to  
constraints

SILOS/  
INTERDISCIPLINARY

ecture  
proce)

# 04: what we did



## Ana in Preston: Research residential, ethical approval and data condensation

Following the award, the first element of the project was for Dr Ana Cecilia Bisso Nunes to visit the Media Innovation Studio research group at the University of Central Lancashire. Ana Cecilia visited for a month from June to July 2019 and during that period a number of activities were undertaken.

Data condensation: two distinct research projects into media labs, one led by Nunes and the other by Mills, offered complementary insights around the innovation structure. During Nunes research residential and in the period immediately afterwards, the team re-examined the data, and 'smashed it' together, extracting core insights and findings. These were richer than initially expected, and the results fed into both the research design and a number of outputs that spanned the duration of the project. These included an industry report in collaboration with the World Association of News Publishers (Nunes and Mills, 2019), parliamentary evidence submission (Mills and Nunes, 2020), journal article (Nunes and Mills, 2021) and book chapter (Nunes, Mills and Pellanda, 2022).

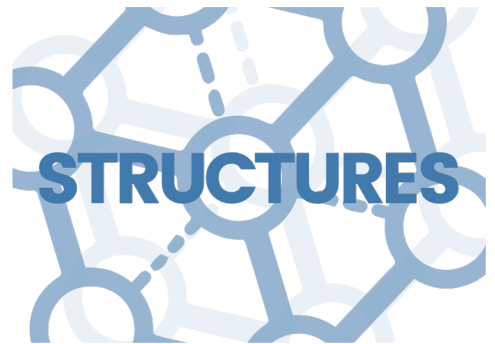
Research design and ethical approval: this period also saw the research team utilise this learning to develop the research that was initially proposed in the grant application. This included the creation of workshop tools, innovation toolkit and a range of participant-facing documentation. Once finalised, the project was submitted to UCLan's central ethical committee, and received approval.

<sup>1</sup>Nunes, A. C. B. (2020). O que é inovação em mídia e jornalismo? Uma análise de media labs e seus projetos [doctoral dissertation, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul]. Repositório Institucional PUCRS. Available at: <https://tede2.pucrs.br/tede2/handle/tede/9145#preview-link0>

<sup>2</sup>Mills, J., & Nunes, A. (2020). Written evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on the Future of Journalism (FOJ0057), UK Parliament.

<sup>3</sup>Nunes, A. C. B., & Mills, J. (2022). JOURNALISM INNOVATION: how media labs are shaping the future of media and journalism. *Brazilian Journalism Research*, 17, 652-679.

<sup>4</sup>Nunes, A. C. B., Mills, J., & Pellanda, E. C. (2022). Media Labs: Catalyzing Experimental, Structural, Learning, and Process Innovation. In *The Emerald Handbook of Entrepreneurship in Latin America* (pp. 87-102). Emerald Publishing Limited.



### Implementation

We had two distinct phases to implementing study. These phases were complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused a variety of breaks and pauses to our data collection schedule.

#### 2019 – 2020

##### Phase 1: Workshops and interviews with funders

Co-creation workshops were used to better understand innovation challenges, desires, ideal structures, teams, outputs and metrics. We also interviewed a sample of funders from Latin America and Europe to better understand their influence and agency within a broader innovation network. To extract meaningful and robust data from newsroom and innovation leaders, the research team took the results from the data condensation process and created a range of tools to facilitate discussions on innovation opportunities, barriers, methods and processes. A sample approach to these workshops can be found in The Indicative Workshop Plan text box (page 14).

Event name	Organiser	Date	City/Country
Digital Media LATAM 2019	WAN-IFRA	Nov/2019	Rio de Janeiro/ Brazil
NxtMedia Conference	NxtMedia	Nov/2019	Trondheim/ Norway
Media Lab Days	WAN-IFRA	Fev/2020	Copenhagen/Denmark

Table 1 : Workshop schedule

## INDICATIVE WORKSHOP PLAN

### Welcome - 5 min

Facilitator welcomes participants, outlines the purpose of the project and the running order for the session. They also confirm that all participants have a copy of the information sheet, have read it, consent to being involved in the study and that they can withdraw/leave at any point. Participants are given an extended period to review the documentation and ask any questions. Furthermore, over the course of the session, they will assure that each participant has the opportunity to ask one-to-one questions. Equally, it is made clear at the outset that participants can leave the workshop at any point.

The welcome will also include standard housekeeping information (fire exits, escape routes and other related topics).

Opportunity for questions

### Sharing findings - 10 min

As an introduction, the research team will present results from media innovation labs research and some initial findings from this project. The goal is to inspire participants to think and reflect about innovation practices. In this talk, the team will also address current journalism challenges and encourage the group to reflect on how innovation could contribute to it. The aim is to give examples without influencing the participants and, hence, encouraging them to think the various ways innovation and journalism can be related in terms of structures, processes and actors involved.

Opportunity for comments

### Introduction to innovation in journalism: goals and challenges - 15 min

In order to start to address the goals and challenges of innovating in journalism, the research team will propose participants to build a wall of desires and a wall of challenges in relation to this theme, made from post its. Later, a discussion will be conducted by clustering all the contributions. The results of this session guide further activities and will remain on display.

### Short break

Ideation: what would be the perfect innovation structure and process? - 30 minutes

Participants are invited to design a perfect innovation structure, based on cards given by the research team. They should work in groups for that. They are invited to choose any Goals, Methods, Structures, Technologies and People cards to create an ideal innovation ecosystem.

Participants are encouraged to use some provided blank cards to tell the researchers more about what we don't know.

A leader from each group presents briefly the project done. After that, a facilitator fixes each group poster on the wall.

### Voting

All projects are displayed in a wall. Participants are invited individually to stick a dot (they are given a limited number) on key elements or specific desires and challenges ideas from the projects done that they like or see merit in. This will allow the team to review broad preferences within and beyond the workshop.

### Unicorns

After the voting, participants are given a unicorn sticker. The purpose of this sticker is to allow participants to identify a 'special' or 'magical' element. Often, professionals or members of the public make decisions based on reasoned or resource-based criteria. Giving them a unicorn provides them with permission to articulate a freer and more aspirational preference. This gives an additional range of insights that the research team can work with to analyse both our process, and the potential design response.

### Thank yous

Publisher's name	Date	Country/Region
Agência tatu	Out/2022	Brazil / Latin America
Altinget	Mar/2020	Denmark / Europe
BBC future	Dec/2020	United Kingdom/ Europe
Corriere della Sera.	July/2021	Italy / Europe
DPG media	July/2021	Netherlands / Europe
Ekstra bladet	May/2021	Denmark/ Europe
El Mostrador	Sept//2022	Chile / Latin America
GK	Out/2022	Equator/ Latin America
NRK	Oct/2022	Norway / Europe
Público	Jul/2022	Portugal / Europe
RPP Noticias (Radio Programas del Perú)	Sept/2022	Peru / Latin America
RTP	Oct/2022	Portugal / Europe
Schibsted	Nov/2022	Norway / Europe
Tagesspiegel	June./021	Germany / Europe

Table 2 : newsroom interview schedule

A subject of study that revealed itself during the initial phases was the presence, role, approaches, agency and impact of funders within the media ecosystems. As such, the research team decided to undertake a pilot study to gather data on core aspects of funder activity. With a small sample of five funders (table 3), we sought to ascertain:

*Insights or reflections on the aims of innovation in journalism and the specific goals of their grants and funding competitions*

- What are the aims on funding innovation in journalism?
- What are the challenges on funding innovation in journalism?
- How do you measure success of your grant competitions (KPIs)?
- Reflections and data from previous journalism innovation grants
- Where does the innovation projects come from (media companies, startups, charities, etc)?

- Are you able to identify from what department or unit the projects have emerged or are managed (innovation team, media labs, newsrooms, etc)?
- What are the most common themes addressed?
- What are the most common mistakes on the project's applications?
- What are the methods used to innovate?
- Have you seen processes change or adapt, and, if yes, how so?
- Do you see some innovation methods as more successful or unsuccessful than others?

*Insights or reflections on the efficacy of journalism innovation projects funded by them*

- How the submitted projects are judged? What are the main criteria?
- What are the roles of journalism innovation in relation to the current challenges faced by journalism?
- Opportunity to make general comments, observations, questions.

Funder's name	Date	interview
European Journalism Centre	Jan/2020	50 mins
SEMBRA Media	May/2020	65 mins
International Center for Journalists (ICFJ)	Apr/2020	40 mins
NESTA	Apr/2020	60 mins
Media Industry Research Foundation of Finland	Feb/2020	30 mins

Table 3: Funder interview schedule

Newsroom	Region	News segment	Company segment	Number of employees*
BBC Future	Europe	Broadcasting corporation	Public	6481 (8)
Schibsted	Europe	Media conglomerate	Private	6158
NRK	Europe	Broadcasting corporation	Public	3088
DPG media	Europe	Media conglomerate	Private	2184
RTP	Europe	Broadcasting corporation	Public	1943
Publico	Europe	Daily newspaper	Private	1680
Corriere della Sera.	Europe	Daily newspaper	Private	918
RPP Noticias (Radio Programas del Perú)	Lat. America	Broadcasting corporation	Private	527
Tagesspiegel	Europe	Daily newspaper	Private	483
Ekstra Bladet	Europe	Tabloid newspaper	Private	326
Altinget	Europe	Digital news	Private	184
El Mostrador	Lat. America	Digital news	Private	65
GK	Lat. America	Digital news	Private	26
Agência Tatu	Lat. America	Data journalism agency	Private	8

Table 4: newsroom and lab classifications

## 2020-2022

Phase 2: in-depth interviews news innovation practitioners in Europe and Latin America

Phase two saw in-depth interviews with legacy and digital start-up organisations in the two regions, and formed the main bulk of the project. We conducted 14 semi-structured interviews that revolved around innovators' and innovation managers' reflections on the aims of innovation drivers, methods and processes in journalism and the specific goals. Although each interview was dynamic and responsive to the subject, the spine of the conversation covered:

- What does innovation mean for you?
- What are the drivers for innovation?
- What approaches, tools or methods do you use to 'innovate'?
- How successful, or not, are they?
- How do you measure this success? Have your measures changed at all, and why?
- What will the key challenges/opportunities to innovation within journalism be in the next 3 years?

## Analysis

Our data analysis involved two activities - the creation of an innovation maturity model index - inspired by the UX maturity index - and the measuring of publishers against this. The index was developed as a result of the interview data, and formative, desk-based activities, and continues and builds upon the themes contained within workshop cards developed in Phase 1.

In addition to this, the research team took an open coding approach that allowed themes and insights to emerge from the data, these both reinforced the Innovation Maturity Model and added to it. The resulting Model allows news publishers to assess and contextualise their own innovation performance, structures and metrics. Our resources connect with this - enabling organisations and practice researchers to identify key tools and processes that can be used to increase their innovation maturity.

## Website resources

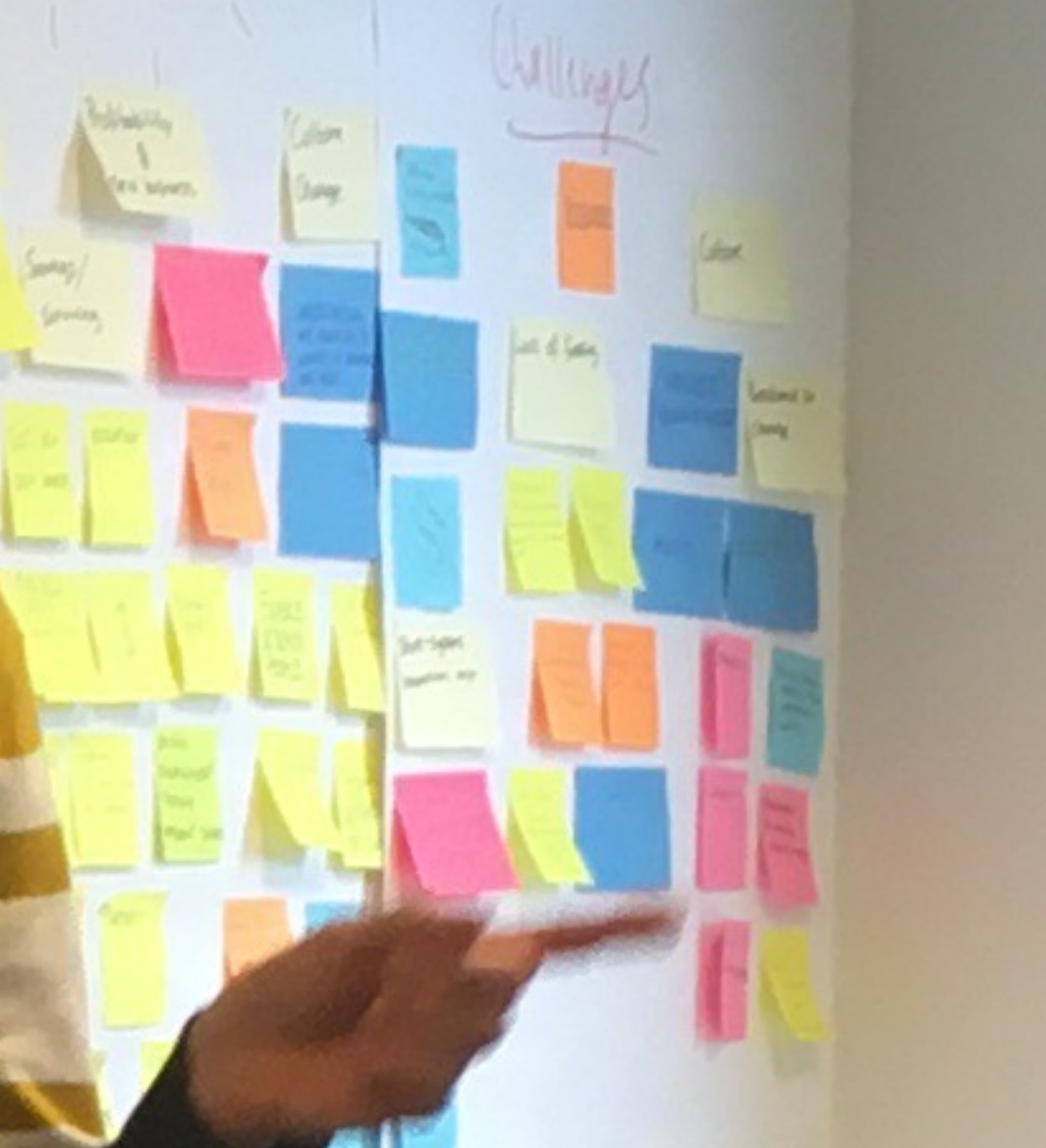
Finally, and in line with the original proposal, we created a website - [innovatingjournalism.org](http://innovatingjournalism.org) - containing details of the project, findings, our own resources and those from other sources to support news media publishers in pursuing innovation.

# Innovation Maturity Index

	Actors involved	Strategy	Innovation perception (Culture)	Process	Research/data/metrics (Outcomes)
Absent	No visible engagement of any employees with innovation activities.	No innovation strategies.	Innovation is not perceived as a general or individual concern. It may be seen as in conflict with working practices and culture.	No processes related to innovation.	No research or collection of data related to innovation.
Limited	Employees may work on innovative ideas, products and processes alone or in small and informal groups.	Green shoots of innovation are identifiable, but there is no organisational strategy to support it.	Employees understand that change is needed, but innovation is seen in a limited way. It is comprehended as adoption of new technology and platforms.	Organisation adopts new working practices due to industry-wide shifts. No particular processes.	No data collection or research about innovation related to the organisation. Data related to innovation in the industry has no influence in organisational decisions.
Emergent	Some individuals and teams are expected to experience with innovation practices, but with little or no support. The figure of "innovation champions" may appear.	Innovation is part of corporate strategy, but management and implementation are incipient and experimental.	Employees perceive innovation as a general goal for the organisation, but still don't see it as a priority.	Teams and individuals might start creating their own processes to develop and implement innovation, but there are no established standards for the whole organisation.	Teams might start to look deeply into data and research related to innovation in the industry, but the organisation is still unsure how to measure its innovation activities.
Structured	Individuals are tasked with and enabled to innovate through adequate resources and direction, but not everyone is required to. There might be interdisciplinary teams whose actions are mandated to consider innovation.	Innovation is part of the vision and strategic plan of the organisation. There is concern with creation, implantation and monitoring of innovation. Will be considered in strategic decisions.	Employees understand that innovation is part of the organisation's vision and strategic plan. Innovative acting and thinking are habitual and are present in different levels.	There are specific processes for innovation within the organisation, but they tend to be based on immediate needs.	Innovation related data is collected. Innovation in the industry is also researched.  Analysis is still in its infancy and doesn't have a major influence on decisions.
Integrated	Teams are interdisciplinary and integrated, and the whole organisation is involved in innovation.	Innovation is a part of the strategic plan of the organisation and has its own development and implementation strategies.	Innovation is part of the vision of the organisation. Employees understand that, see innovative action daily and understand its importance.	There are standards and practices that link different teams and departments.	Innovation related data is used to influence decisions in higher levels and monitor success.
Innate	All employees have the possibility to be innovative, and this is expected. There are teams (permanent or not) dedicated exclusively to thinking and developing innovation. Innovation leaders.	Innovation is a part of the organisation core values. There's a long-term timeframe for innovation and it's seen as necessary for the organisation's sustainability.	Individuals feel enabled to become innovation role models if they wish to and perceive innovation as fundamental to the organisation and positive to the whole industry.	A range of innovation processes are used and the organisation already has its own well established innovation methods.	Innovation related data is used to influence decisions in higher levels and to provide knowledge for the industry.

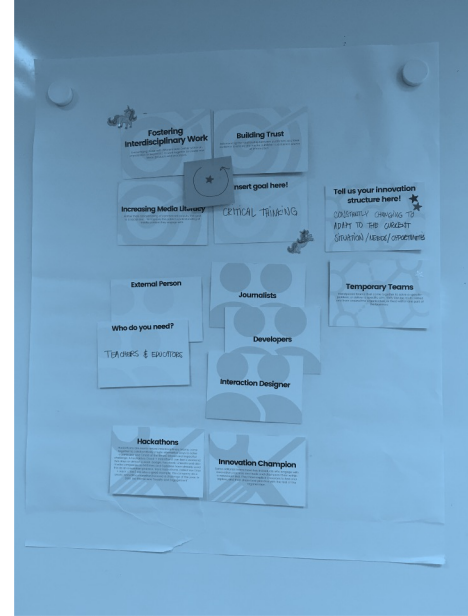
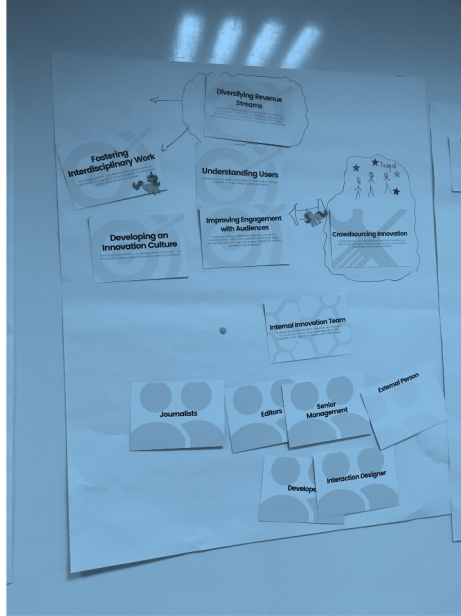
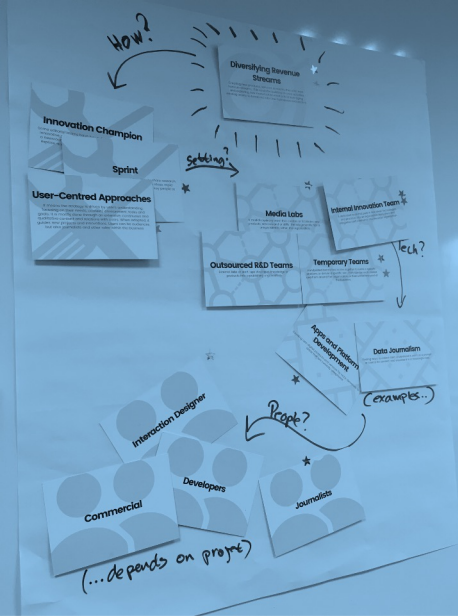






*"We believe that journalists are capable of creating new things, whether tools, platforms, or innovations in the way of doing journalism".*

*Innovation Leader*



# 05: what we learnt

*"We are quite process averse. We hate process. We laugh at methodologies."*

*Innovation Leader*

*"Whenever possible, we create a methodology to test and validate, to see if it works"*

*Innovation Leader*

## Insights and learnings

A standout insight from the project is the diverse and varied work around innovation. There is no one model or approach, no single unifying theme. Some adopt specific methods – design-sprints, three-horizon strategic plans, hackathons and others – others have no specific methods, but pursue digital innovation and change that is motivated by a combination of audience-need, conducting effective and impactful journalism and revenue generation. Some approaches are shared, others are individual to one or a small sub-set of publishers. The research themes that emerged were:

What follows is an overview of our key findings ...

## Looking beyond structures and processes

Our initial proposal focussed on better understanding what processes and structures news media innovators were adopting across Europe and Latin American. We found a diverse range of structures, processes, metric and strategic thinking and action in relation to journalistic innovation activities. Each publisher was responding to their own organisational structure, media ecosystem, economic environment and audience requirements, behaviours and content preference. Our findings suggest three top level insights: People, Social and Strategic Maturity. These are supported by the sub-themes of People, Methods, Functions [pathways to goals], Motivations, Barriers and Management and Outputs. We also share brief findings around funders and their contribution to the journalism innovation ecosystem, although this pilot study is less developed. Our findings are ::

### PEOPLE

*Innovation (and product) managers are utilised to 'make innovation happen'*

A repeated trend was the role of the individual or specific individuals within an innovation context. Our interviewees were often fulfilling the role of 'innovation champion' or 'innovation agent' (Rogers, 2010)\*. Individuals would be tasked with innovation within their own context. This could be via the running of a lab, a senior management position geared towards developing new products and processes, or coordinating innovative activities at a strategic level. One interviewee saw themselves as being on the ground digital innovator, tasked overcoming structural, physical, cultural, knowledge-based barriers, and to assist the organisation to 'transform' into a sustainable journalistic entity. The need to innovate, and the ability to execute and measure is manifest in an individual. One innovation manager

explained: "So in a sense I created my own job and I was like , OK , we need to be innovative... whatever that means. Right? Because innovation can be anything."

*Interdisciplinary teams are purposefully created and deployed to 'innovate'. These teams can be permanent or temporary convened around a project goal*

A shared trait across our samples was the creation of interdisciplinary teams. They combine journalistic, design, technological and commercial knowledge. The specific construction and skills weighting would depend on the host organisation and the ecosystem in which it operates, and its goals and resources. These teams would sometimes be permanent, but could also be infrequent or ad hoc - formed by a specific need or opportunity. There was a distinct combination of editorial or journalistic knowledge and software developers, but these were the nucleus. The researchers found that innovation teams incorporated design, social, data visualisation, political, business and product skills. This latter appeared often, with innovation encapsulated by the development and launch of new products.

*Isolated, integrated, and pop-up projects*

Throughout the interviews, there were a range of alternative physical structures on display. Some were located in a specified physical space, others were located within the editorial operations. Innovation projects sometimes had no physical space - and were simply convened as a special project

\*Rogers, E. M. (2010). Diffusion of innovations. Simon and Schuster.

## *Hiring of external bespoke skills were required to meet the requirements of innovation projects and goals*

With innovation being the focus, structures and processes were explicitly outside of the standard operational normal. As such, innovation teams and projects often required new skills to be hired into the organisation. A project-by-project and fixed-term arrangement was the most often seen mechanism for this, but occasionally core skills were a permanent addition.

*"We change from project to project and the people we employ for different projects."*

### **User-centredness: understanding audiences:**

An emphasis on people also was strongly felt in relation to audiences. Publishers are focussing on user-needs and how they can meet them. For example, one interview described: "We want readers who are engaged with us, who really like us. We call them friends and relations. We don't want just people who just passed by because we don't earn from them. If they look at advertising, for example, it gives us one cent or two cents. No, we want them to subscribe for three or four or five dollars per week. And these days, this is our main focus right now to get people to subscribe."

In order to achieve this goal, publishers use a "kind of true personalization that functions on a kind of quite deep level, because it's that user gratification you're satisfying that needs."

## **METHODS**

A rich variety of innovation methods and approaches were identified throughout the process. A unifying theme from the diverse sample was an increasingly aware awareness of and response to audience needs and behaviours. There are incorporated into the innovation processes and structures in multiple ways, and often combine with accelerated innovation methods. For example, 'product thinking, 'design sprints and hackathons had been utilised by a number of publishers. Products were A/B tested to understand audience preferences, and increased engagement on digital platforms aimed to provide a more focussed understanding of what users actually want.

## **FUNCTIONS: PATHWAYS TO GOALS**

Scanning, scouting and measuring: the activities of innovation teams enable the organisation to scan the horizon of technologies, skills, people, audience behaviours and revenue streams. They also enable an organisation to measure their performance, applicability and potential. This is a fundamentally different role than editorial, business development, quality assurance and other organisational activities. It directly relates to innovation and exploring the art and potential of possible futures.

Learning and failing: unlike editorial teams' focus on producing 'complete' and 'finished' pieces, innovation units, teams and individuals' mandate is around testing, learning and failing. Failing is part of the role, which creates an opposing culture to other functions with publishing organisations.

Executing: although there is an emphasis on developing, testing and trialing, innovation processes and structures also have to deliver to be seen as successful. This execution could be focussed on product development, or transformation, but they are not configured as a luxury beyond metrics and value judgement.

Aligning and embodying strategic aims: leading from the point above, innovation champions, agents, teams, projects and labs are, fundamentally, a delivery mechanism for the organisation's strategic aims, or an element of them. Their mandate can be to achieve product development, cultural shifts, training and knowledge or exploration, but they are rooted in business aims. A European innovation manager explained: "One of the things I'm working on now is to have more clear strategy - I have my own of course - but that the whole organisation are involved in making my strategy - so when we make a project, everyone knows there's a reason for that."

## **MOTIVATIONS?**

Innovation activities are orientated to overarching commercial strategy and journalistic values, specifically in relation to journalism's function within democratic societies. Another sub-motivation was to combat the power and influence of the major tech platforms. This factor was nuanced and multifaceted across our sample. For example, approaches were to create products and services that would capture proprietary data, to adopt user-centred perspectives to enable products to be as usable and relevant as possible, to create content ecosystems that would allow users to access a range of publishers' output. There was, from some, a pragmatic approach. Publishers had far less resources to create than major platforms, but that shouldn't mean they can't be proactive in combatting their more negative effects.

## **BARRIERS AND LIMITATIONS**

Barriers to innovation include inter-team communication, (physical and mental) space and time away from the pressures of delivery and funds to think about the future without endangering current commitments was also an issue. It means time, people and funds are key and overlapping requirements for news innovation to emerge.

Much innovation is immediate and 'short-term'. A minority of publishers embed a longer-term perspective on research and development.

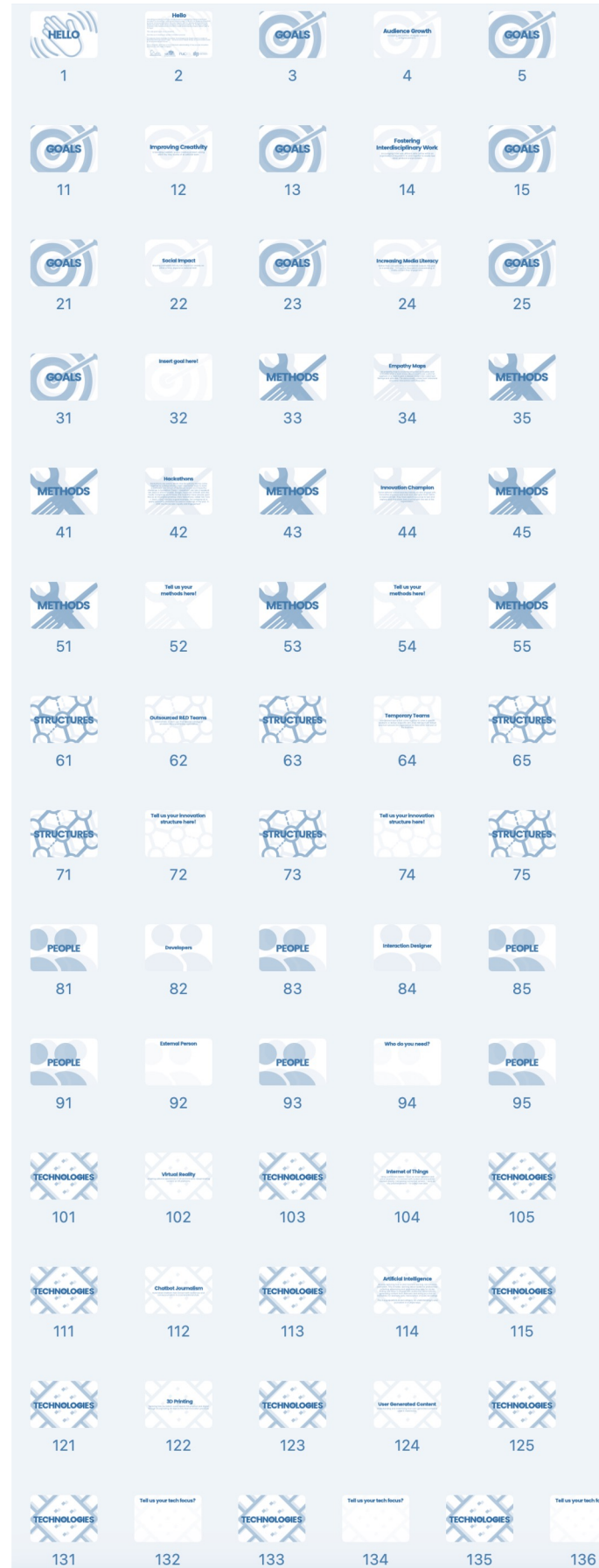
## MANAGEMENT AND OUTPUTS

*Outputs are not always strictly defined within a new product, tool or process:* Improving an existing solution and dealing/reacting to challenges of digital economy such as engaging or finding new audiences is a common goal for emergent innovation structures. Innovation teams and leaders are also flexible, and respond to need. This can be on a story-by-story basis: providing data visualisations or immersive editorial experiences, to creating organisation-wide training and development programme, to medium-to long-term research and development. Across all these activities, communication and linking to a variety of departments and externals was a fundamental activity.

*Performance indicators are defined product by product,* especially in early stages of innovation structures: innovation is commonly connected to specific products and their market-fit. Therefore, performance indicators are defined and followed in order to measure the success of each innovation initiative. A global medium- or long-term vision of innovation with related strategic performance indicators are not common, showing that innovation is more about innovative project/product development than a pathway to a new organisational stage/goal, especially in early staged maturity levels.

*Innovation news products are still divided between journalism and business metrics,* but innovation demands a more holistic approach: Leaders mention content and business performance indicators as two separate inputs. Whistle it is a common journalistic practice - to separate news and business - a product strategy could benefit of interconnected indicators supporting a unique news/business/innovation vision.

*Funding:* the project explored funding landscapes from an external perspective, as mentioned in the Executive Summary, however, another theme emerged from media management perspective. Innovation teams were charged with capturing external funding from a variety of sources, but, for some, this revealed a degree of maturity. Some funds - such as Google DNI - were seen to be useful within a specific time and place, but not a sustainable option for commercial organisations. One interviewee also highlighted the importance of managing funding internally: "An interesting way to think about formalising an innovation process [is] the disbursement of funds and resources towards it, but at the same time pulling everybody along in the same direction." They added that funded internal projects mapped against the "overarching goal of the organisation, whatever that may be".



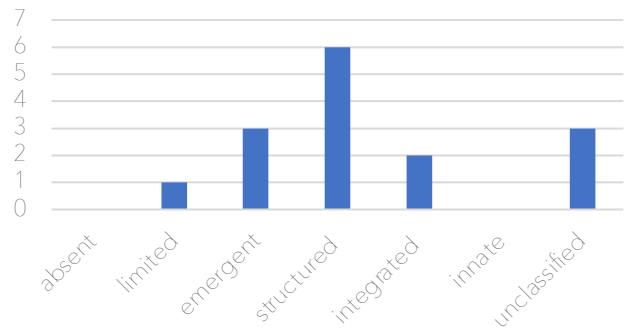
## INNOVATION MATURITY MODEL

Applying the Innovation Maturity Model offered a number of initial findings. However, these are limited by the small sample size, and the iterative methodology. The Latin American interviews were focussed much more on digital natives, rather than legacy newsrooms and broadcast organisations, which constituted the bulk of the European sample. Nevertheless, some interesting patterns did emerge.

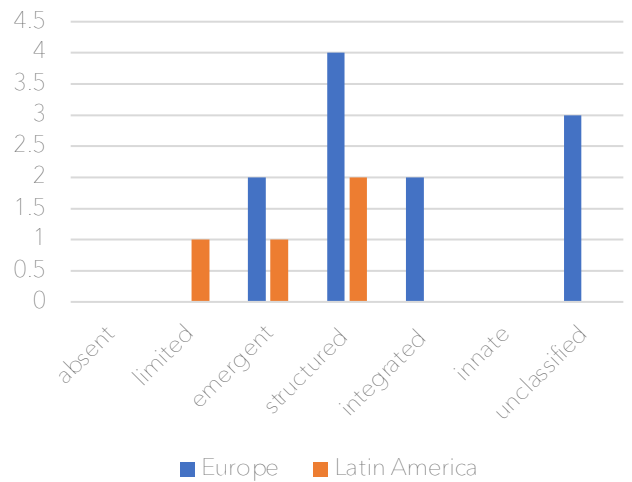
When measured against our innovation maturity, we found:

- All publishers are engaged with innovation activities, with the majority reporting a 'structured' approach.
- No organisation was reported as innate.
- When viewed proportionally, Latin American publishers, on average, were grouped at a lower position innovation matrix, although the sample size is too small for this to be seen as a verified trend
- During the analysis, we discounted three publishers due to: their status as consultancy didn't map against the internal audit that this model is focussed upon; the units were geared around a specific theme (green media) and was therefore an outlier and not an innovation unit or hub in and of itself.

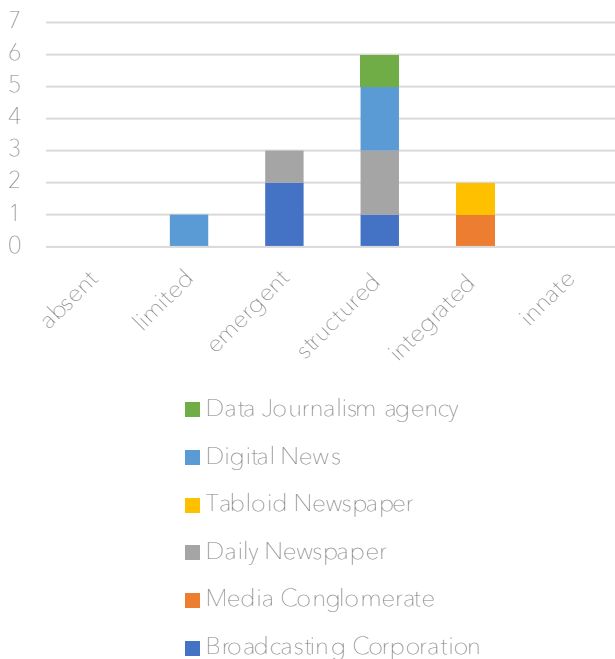
Innovation Maturity Model



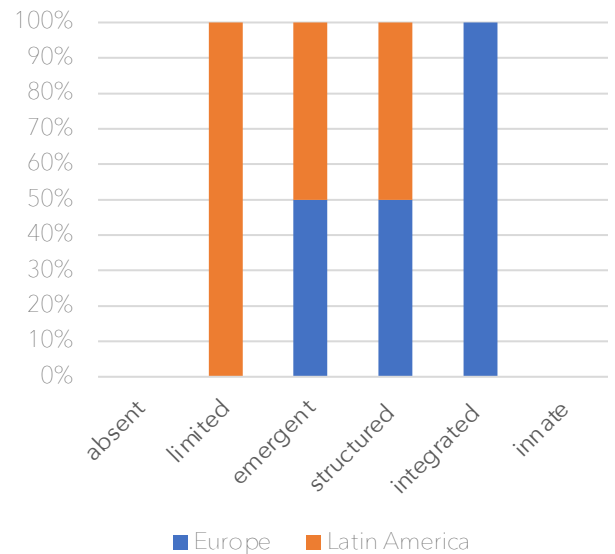
Innovation Maturity Model: basic regional count



Maturity by organisation type



Proportionality



# 06. final thoughts future work

At the end of the project, the research team feel as though we have simply scratched the surface of innovation processes and structures that are in a constant state of flux. Our sample size is not sufficient to extrapolate comparisons between Latin America and Europe, and further work (breadth and depth) is required to better understand both the wider trends and the nuances of innovation and innovation management. Nevertheless, our core insights point towards the importance of innovation actors, the networks in which they site and operate, and signs of increasing innovation maturity. Future work would examine these trends on both a quantitative and qualitative basis, to validate, challenge and develop these notions. What also emerges is the diversity of innovation approaches - product thinking, user-centred approaches and the combination of interdisciplinary skills to create a more effective pathway towards business sustainability, journalistic activity and social impact. We found that structures melt away, and innovation centres around our three core themes of **people, social** and **maturing innovation**.



# 07. project outputs

To read, listen or watch more on our work, a range of papers, book chapters, talks and resources are available.

Website: [www.innovatingjournalism.org](http://www.innovatingjournalism.org)

## Talks

Mills, J., Bisso Nunes, A.C., Innovating journalism structures and processes: Media Labs, Innovation Teams, methods and beyond, emma Talks, virtual, June 22nd 2020

Nunes ... Journalism Innovation module... Available at: [https://vimeo.com/432050577?fbclid=IwAR0f6mXJ\\_gKKifj3jY-kNVqUxNOFYDI1rLZp-oaxqUf3VnMWMGICTbEPEMc](https://vimeo.com/432050577?fbclid=IwAR0f6mXJ_gKKifj3jY-kNVqUxNOFYDI1rLZp-oaxqUf3VnMWMGICTbEPEMc)

## Book chapter

Nunes, Ana Cecilia B., Mills, John and Pellanda, Eduardo (2022) Media Labs: Catalyzing Experimental, Structural, Learning, and Process Innovation. In: The Emerald Handbook of Entrepreneurship in Latin America. Emerald Publishing, pp. 87-102. ISBN 978-1-80071-956-9

## Journal article

Nunes, Ana Cecilia Bisso and Mills, John (2021) JOURNALISM INNOVATION: how media labs are shaping the future of media and journalism. Brazilian Journalism Research, 17 (3). pp. 652-679. ISSN 1981-9854

## Industry report

Nunes, Ana Cecilia Bisso and Mills, John (2019) Media Labs, unlocking change. Trends in Newsrooms, 2019 (#3). pp. 1-27.

## Parliamentary enquiry evidence

Mills, John and Nunes, Ana (2020) Written evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on the Future of Journalism (FOJ0057). UK Parliament, London.

## Press coverage

New report: Media Labs, unlocking change (InPublishing)

¿Cuál es el papel del laboratorio de medios en los futuros periodísticos? [What is the role of the media laboratory in journalistic futures?] (Guardiana.com.bo)

# 08. thank yous and acknowledgements

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