

From Trustee Journalism to Embedded Journalism: The News Embargo Break of Pope Francis' *Laudato si'*¹

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Abstract

Covering religious news requires careful attention, because it blends the issues related to the Institution (the Pope and his documents) with topics related to people's faith and values. Therefore, Vatican journalists ("Vaticanists") are forced to respect strict rules, as for example the news embargo.

*The paper aims to understand in which way the practice of embargo in Vatican journalism is consistent with a trustee model whose "principal" is represented by citizens. In order to do so, the paper focuses on a recent and very significant case of religious news embargo break: the publication of a draft of the Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato si'*, three days before the established official presentation. From a methodological point of view, we carried out a qualitative media content analysis on Italian newspapers, and qualitative interviews to key informants, selected among Italian journalists.*

The researches show that Vatican journalism can be considered as an embedded journalism, concerning which the critical ethical values nonetheless appear to be reversed. It appears to be a trustee journalism when its principals are represented by believers, but probably not when they consist of citizens.

Keywords

Religious news, embedded journalism, news embargo, professional ethics, trustee journalism.

Résumé

Couvrir l'information religieuse nécessite d'une attention particulière, car cela veut dire s'occuper à la fois des questions qui concernent l'Institution (le Pape et ses documents), et des sujets concernant la foi et les valeurs des croyants. Par conséquent,

les journalistes qui s'occupent du Vatican (les « Vaticanistes ») sont forcés de respecter des règles très strictes, par exemple en matière d'embargo de l'information.

Cet article vise à comprendre de quelle façon la pratique de l'embargo dans le journalisme Vatican est cohérente avec un modèle fiduciaire (trustee) où le « mandant » est représenté par les citoyens.

*Dans ce but, l'article se focalise sur un cas récent et très significatif de violation d'embargo, c'est-à-dire la publication d'une ébauche de l'Encyclique de Pape François *Laudato si'*, trois jours avant la date établie pour sa présentation officielle.*

D'un point de vue méthodologique, nous avons réalisé une qualitative media content analysis sur les journaux italiens, et des interviews qualitatives à des observateurs privilégiés choisis parmi les journalistes italiens.

Nos recherches montrent que le journalisme Vatican peut être considéré comme un journalisme « embarqué », dont les problématiques de nature éthique apparaissent toutefois inversées. Il apparaît comme un journalisme fiduciaire lorsque ses mandants sont les croyants, mais non pas, probablement, lorsqu'il s'agit des citoyens au sens large.

Mots-clés

Journalisme religieux, embargo journalistique, journalisme embarqué, déontologie, journalisme fiduciaire.

1. Introduction

In the wide scenario of journalistic phenomena, religious journalism represents one of the most ancient and significant genres (Hoover, 2009; Stout, 2012), which development is closely related to the evolution of religious institutions (referring to Catholic Church, especially starting from the Second

Vatican Council) and affected by religion mediatization (Lundby, 2009; Hjarvard, 2013; Hepp, 2013).

As a consequence, over the last fifty years the journalistic coverage of religious news has significantly grown, and today it shows the same hybridity, which characterizes all the journalistic genres (Sorrentino & Bianda, 2013; Harcup, 2014; Zielonka, 2015). In fact, as religious journalists can belong to several and diverse newsrooms (from foreign news desk to the political one), so religious news involves several topics, from the most religious issues (related to faith and values) to the most institutional ones (for example, related to the Pope and his documents, or to the Vatican State), not to say about all the issues “related to” religion (from political to economical ones, from social to cultural ones) (Costa, Merola & Caruso, 2012; Tridente, 2014).

The relationship between religious topics and their media coverage, which involves the world, becomes still more important when we focus on Italian context, where all the events related to the Vatican have a high level of newsworthiness, due also to the news value of proximity (Wolf, 1985; McQuail, 1994; Sorrentino & Bianda, 2013).

The management of religious news, especially when we focus on Vatican news, takes shape between two main actors: the Holy See Press Office and the accredited journalists (the so-called “Vaticanists”), who usually cover the news coming from the Holy See or referring to the Pope for religious and no-religious news media. Very clear rules and established practices govern the relationship between the two actors, starting from the so-called “news embargo”. In particular, it takes shape when the Holy See Press Office makes available to accredited journalists some documents few days/hours before their publication. In this way, accredited journalists have a reasonable period firstly to analyse and then to report them (when embargo ends) in the better way in respect of public interest. Therefore, religious news (and even more the Vatican one) forces journalists to respect specific rituals, which tend to re-define the idea of “scoop” and influence their news-management (Costa, Merola & Caruso, 2012).

Based on these premises, the paper aims to understand in which way the practice of embargo in Vatican journalism is consistent with a trustee model whose “principal” (Goffman, 1981) is represented by citizens (Schudson, 1998).

In order to do so, the paper focuses on a very significant case of religious news embargo break, which refers to the publication, in the Italian weekly magazine *L'Espresso* website, of a draft of the Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato si'*, three days before the established official presentation². This leak angered Vatican officials, who defined it a “heinous act” and revoked the press credentials to Sandro Magister, the journalist who published the draft. It also generated a heated debate among Italian journalists³, which emerges also in the journalistic coverage of the news.

From a methodological point of view, we carried out two different researches: a qualitative media content analysis on Italian newspapers (Altheide & Schneider, 2013; Macnamara, 2005) and qualitative interviews to key informants, selected among Italian journalists (Corbetta, 2003a, 2003b).

In order to answer our research questions, we have analysed the two textual corpuses in respect of three meaningful items: *what happened*, *why it happened*, *what it means*.

2. The journalistic coverage of news embargo break in the main Italian newspapers

The first research we carried out focuses on the journalistic coverage of the news embargo break, aiming to understand:

- a) In which way its coverage takes place in respect of the general coverage of Pope Francis' encyclical;
- b) In which way Italian newspapers have reported it.

To these purposes, we have analysed all the articles focused on *Laudato Si'*, published from June, 16th to June, 23rd (the seven days following the draft publication on *L'Espresso* website) in the main Italian newspapers: *Avvenire*, *Corriere della Sera*, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, *Il Foglio*, *Il Giornale*, *Il Manifesto*, *Il Messaggero*, *Il Sole 24 Ore*, *Il Tempo*, *L'Osservatore Romano*, *la Repubblica*, *La Stampa*, *Libero*. The analysed corpus consists of 103 articles.

The first data, which emerges from our research, concerns the dimension of the coverage about Pope Francis' encyclical. On one hand, all the analysed newspapers cover it, and it certainly happens because of the several news values, which this news involves: from news dimension to reference to elites, from unpredictability to proximity, not to say about human

interest. On the other hand, the coverage results as really heterogeneous from a quantitative point of view: the widest reporting is offered by *Avvenire* (19 articles) and *L'Osservatore Romano* (16 articles), which are the most “religious” newspapers among the analysed ones⁴. Also general interest daily newspapers, as *la Repubblica* and *La Stampa*, cover in

depth the topic (respectively 12 and 10 articles); on the contrary only few articles report it in *Il Tempo* and *Il Fatto Quotidiano* (respectively 1 and 2 articles). Therefore, the research confirms the general interest of Italian newspapers in respect of Vatican news, even though meaningful differences related to the newspapers editorial line.

Table 1 – The journalistic coverage of *Laudato si'*

Newspapers	Articles focused on Pope Francis' encyclical	Articles focused on news embargo break
<i>Avvenire</i>	19	1
<i>Corriere della Sera</i>	7	1
<i>Il Fatto Quotidiano</i>	2	2
<i>Il Foglio</i>	7	2
<i>Il Giornale</i>	6	1
<i>Il Manifesto</i>	8	3
<i>Il Messaggero</i>	4	1
<i>Il Sole 24 Ore</i>	4	0
<i>Il Tempo</i>	1	0
<i>L'Osservatore Romano</i>	16	1
<i>la Repubblica</i>	12	2
<i>La Stampa</i>	10	1
<i>Libero</i>	6	2
Total	103	17

The second data we have to highlight concerns the shift from the articles, which cover the encyclical as a whole, and those ones focused especially on the news embargo break. This second category consists of only 17 articles; therefore, at first blush the topic “embargo” seems to be marginal in respect of the topic “encyclical”. Nonetheless, all the analysed newspapers cover the news⁵ and, doing so, they don't restrict themselves to give the news, but offer an interpretation about *what happened*, *why it happened* and *what it means*.

a) Articles which aim to report “what happened”

All the analysed articles tend to report – more or less in depth – what happened, especially focusing on Father Federico Lombardi's⁶ reaction (Muolo, 2015; Vecchi, 2015; Grana, 2015; Anonymous, 2015b; Anonymous, 2015c), on the economic damage for Vatican Publishing House (Vendemiale, 2015) and on the “mole hunt” started in Vatican (Anonymous, 2015a).

In respect of “what happened”, the articles are usually descriptive, and their tones appear neutral.

b) Articles which aim to understand “why it happened”

The majority of the analysed articles wonders about the reasons why Sandro Magister (and the editorial staff which he belongs to) chose to break the embargo. The most recurrent interpretation, suggested by journalists, concerns the internal and external opposition, which has taken shape over the last two years against Pope Francis; in particular, articles suggest that a meaningful part of Roman Curia disagrees with Bergoglio about his “politics”; they also state that there are some news media (for example *L'Espresso* media group, which Sandro Magister belongs to) which have become its “spokesperson”. Therefore, a preview publishing would be supposed to reduce the impact of Pope Francis' message (Vecchi, 2015; Grana, 2015; Tiliacos, 2015; Kocci, 2015; Giansoldati, 2015; Galeazzi, 2015; Anonymous, 2015b; Anonymous, 2015c).

On the contrary, only two articles (Grana, 2015; Kocci, 2015) report what Magister said in respect of his conduct, and especially that his magazine decided

to break the embargo only due to market demands. These articles also state that the final decision about the draft publication involved not only the journalist, but also the magazine editorial staff and, above all, its editor-in-chief.

In respect of “why it happened”, the articles appear less descriptive, and also the journalists begin to take a stand.

c) Articles which aim to explain “what it means”

Those articles focus on three different topics. On one hand, they wonder if the “Magister affair” effectively represents a news embargo break: in fact, the text published by Magister was only a draft, and it arrived to him not from official channels (for example: the Holy See Press Office) (Ansaldo, 2015; Muolo, 2015; Vecchi, 2015; Tiliacos, 2015; Giansoldati, 2015). On the other hand, the articles quote what Lombardi said – the news embargo break represents a serious lack of journalistic professional ethic, which affects negatively the relationship between the Holy See Press Office and the accredited journalists (Muolo, 2015; Vecchi, 2015; Grana, 2015; Anonymous, 2015b; Anonymous, 2015c) – and then wonder about what journalists had to do after the news embargo break: could they publish the encyclical draft (breaking in turn the embargo), or on the contrary should they wait for the official text (continuing on respecting the embargo) (Kocci, 2015)? Finally, the articles focus on the sanction inflicted to Magister, especially in respect of the other journalists’ conduct: in particular, «Il Foglio» argues that, perhaps, the Holy See Press Office should punish also the other journalists who have published the encyclical text after Magister, but still before the end of embargo (Tiliacos, 2015).

In respect of “what it means”, the articles tend to be more investigative, and different positions among journalists take shape (concerning the different issues to be covered rather than an evaluation of the conduct of Magister and Lombardi).

3. Inside the news embargo break: the key informants’ analysis

The second research we carried out consists of five qualitative interviews to key informants selected among Italian journalists who have an established experience with religious and especially Vatican issues in their work. We excluded the journalists of

the newspapers, in order to prevent on one side a duplication of the findings of the other research by interviewing the authors of the analysed articles; on the other side, to avoid on the contrary to focus on the single personal experience whether the content of the articles may not correspond to the journalist’s opinion.

Therefore, we interviewed the president of the main Italian catholic journalists’ association (Andrea Melodia, UCSI) and four “Vaticanists”: Vania De Luca (RaiNews24, the all-news TV of the Italian public broadcasting company RAI), Raffaele Luise (RadioUno, the first RAI radio channel), Giovanna Chirri (ANSA news agencies) and Salvatore Izzo (AGI news agencies).

a) “What happened”

First of all, all the interviewed journalists pointed out the specific embargo management applied in the Holy See Press Room. In fact, as the embargo appears to be an unwritten rule (and consequently with unwritten sanctions) in most of the journalistic contexts where it is employed, the Holy See Press Room imposes the accredited journalists to sign an agreement under which any previously announced document (as an encyclical, or a Pope’s speech) has to be considered under embargo also before its distribution.

This system, Izzo argues, is based on the fact that the Holy See is a very complex organism, where several different persons work on very elaborate texts, which as a consequence are easily obtained by journalists through unofficial means. However, the complexity of the Vatican as an institution, and of its texts in particular, appears to be a nodal point in the relationship between journalists and their sources.

As key informants state, the “Vaticanist” is a journalist whose skills cannot neglect the foundations of journalism, regardless of its specialization (Chirri) but, at the same time, requires «a solid cultural competence concerning the main issues of Church and faith» (Izzo), «an intercultural and also interreligious knowledge» (Luise), «to deal with internal affairs, foreign affairs, culture, society, politics – in particular the relationship with Italy based on the Concordat» (De Luca). «It is quite difficult and complicate – Melodia affirms – to deeply understand the secular and religious logics of this peculiar organization», and that’s why, De Luca

concludes, the “Vaticanist” needs to have a «deep knowledge of the most complex subject in the world».

Based on this preliminary observation, the answers of key informants allow us to identify a fundamental aspect of the use of embargo in Vatican context. In particular, De Luca underlines that «embargo is something that helps us in our work, because complex texts need to be understood, to be read and re-read, to be prepared. We need time, which is today the most mortified aspect of our job». «As a journalist – adds Chirri – I commit to respecting the level of complexity of a papal document as an encyclical: I commit to reading it all, to reflecting upon it, to identifying the most important aspects. It’s an intellectual work that cannot be reduced to a scoop or a slogan».

As a consequence, concerning the specific analysed case, the key informants underlined specifically that Magister’s embargo break, beyond its regulatory aspects, is even more serious because it cannot be justified by journalistic reasons. All the interviewed journalists agree with the fact that this embargo break cannot be considered as a scoop. «It seemed to be only a prank», says De Luca, as Melodia wonders if «to arrive first by cheating, by breaking a rule... did you gave a good self-image?».

De Luca and Chirri focus also on the fact that Magister advised that the encyclical he published was a draft, and that he didn’t know who sent it to him. «What am I supposed to talk about? – wonders De Luca – Should I comment a part of the text that maybe has been already removed?». «I don’t publish something without knowing what it is», adds Chirri, «it could have been anything whatsoever».

Finally, Izzo and Chirri underline that Magister didn’t bring any journalistic added value: Izzo argues that «by having the text, he could make a summary, highlight its problematic issues, etc.»; and Chirri adds: «if he had read it, if he had proposed a reflection and an analysis of the main issues, the thing might have made sense. Then we could say that *L’Espresso* arrived first».

b) “Why it happened”

Three interpretations of why it happened come up over the interviews, the first and most deepened of which is not strictly related to journalistic issues, but underlies structurally the other two. In fact, the key informants (in particular Izzo and Luise in a more explicit way) include the embargo break in a more

extended and articulated political plan to take position against Pope Francis and its policies within the Church: «Pope Francis’ pontificate is similar to a sword, as Jesus says in the Gospel: it divides. With his reform, he is touching huge economic interests», says Izzo. «The embargo has been broken – adds Luise – in order to weaken the great impact, which this encyclical nevertheless had, because it is a profoundly innovatory document. This deeply disturbs the anti-Bergoglio area, which needed to dismiss it somehow».

The second interpretation is the direct consequence of the first one in the journalistic field. The “Vaticanist”, in fact, can be a part of the political debate within the Church and not only an observer, depending on the relationship with the sources. «The correct relationship with the source – claims Luise – comes from mutual trust and respect. The other way is its mirror image: the journalist is the megaphone of the source, the propagator of its point of view. In return, he has the news». «We are witnessing a polarization, also in journalism», states Izzo, «the Pope is dismantling some mechanisms, which were settled over the years. Some people are damaged by the reform and resist, in good or in bad faith. These people have been, even in the recent past, in very important positions, and it is normal that they know journalists with whom they established a dialogue and a collaboration, also an upright one. However, this has led today to the existence of a branch of the Church, with a journalistic back-up, that tries to demolish the Pope in every way possible. It is very dangerous that some journalists lend themselves to this». «Magister – Izzo concludes – belongs to those journalists who seem to be enlisted in the anti-Pope army. He’s very militant at this time».

Finally, there is a third interpretation, which relates the embargo break to its economical repercussions. In fact, the free publication represented also a serious damage for the Vatican Publishing House, which is entrusted with printing and selling all the encyclicals. Izzo mentions that the embargo break led to a civil suit for infringement of copyright, as Chirri and De Luca refers to the publishing companies’ gain in weakening the commercial appeal of the encyclical. From the point of view of the media group that published the encyclical, Melodia and De Luca underlined that the embargo break turned in a success for *L’Espresso*, which had millions of contacts in its website.

c) “What it means”

One of the most meaningful aspects emerging from the interviews is that the break of an embargo puts into question the process of journalistic negotiation as a whole. In fact, whether it is a settled practice or a defined rule, the respect of an embargo appears to be a structural demonstration of fairness for a journalist.

According to key informants, the break of an embargo, therefore, and of the Vatican embargo related to the *Laudato si'* encyclical in particular, presents different interesting features at the five levels of journalistic negotiation, which correspond to the five main relationships that a journalist carries on during its professional activity.

- The first one is the relationship with the official source of the encyclical. The *Laudato si'* embargo break, says De Luca, caused severe sanctions to Magister and to other journalists related to the same media group. Chirri argues that this specific embargo break caused in the immediate following days a change of practice by the Holy See Press Room, who released to journalists the definitive version of *Laudato si'* just two hours before the official press conference. Finally, Melodia supposes that the management of the embargo by the Holy See Press Room will evolve in a more inflexible way, as happened, Chirri and Izzo remind, with two other embargo breaks related to two encyclical (*Centesimus Annus* in 1991, *Evangelium Vitae* in 1995), that led to the obligation to sign a commitment, as described above.

- The second one is the relationship with unofficial sources. Luise underlines the growth of a sort of competition between informers, starting from the Nineties and connected with a Church mediatisation due to Pope John Paul II's charisma. Izzo highlights on the contrary another aspect, which is related to the faith of the journalist, who somehow supports in the informer a behaviour that is considered for all intents and purposes a sin.

- The third one is the relationship between the journalist and the newsroom/publisher. In particular, Chirri and De Luca observed that, on one hand, any embargo break has to be considered as the outcome of an agreement between journalists and their editors; on the other hand, that the same agreement is still binding even after the embargo has been broken by another journalist. «If it's not theft, it's handling», states De Luca, as Chirri underlines that editors and publishers often consider as troublemakers those

journalists who refuse to cover a news whose embargo has been broken by another journalist.

- The fourth one concerns the relationship between journalists and his/her colleagues. De Luca underlines that «the embargo is a rule that protects everybody of us, it helps us in our job [...] If we don't respect it, we turn out to be impoverished». Chirri affirms that «this kind of unfairness harms to journalism itself», describing furthermore how her diligence to study the real contents of an encyclical appears to be unnecessary if its news coverage is regulated by the fact that an embargo is respected or not: due to the embargo breaks «we are no longer able to have texts in advance. However, the crafty ones manage to have it anyway, so... This has harmed me a lot in my work, because I am used to read carefully and handle what I'm talking and writing about». Finally, Izzo points out another consequence of the polarised journalistic context related to the different approaches to the embargo: «[Magister] is now a militant, I can't consider him as a journalist in this case. However, maybe he could say the same thing about me».

- The fifth and last relationship is probably the most important one in the journalistic mediation process: the relationship with citizens, who represent the journalists' “principals”. However, this relationship appears to be the less quoted and pointed out by the key informants. Although it can be frequently deduced from the answers, only De Luca explicitly refers to it («embargo protects our public, who breaks an embargo does not give a better service to public: it is important to arrive first, but it is more important to arrive better!»), while Izzo only argues that a difference of few hours, or even minutes, in learning about a complex document as an encyclical cannot represent a public interest.

4. Discussion

The two researches we carried out show several and meaningful analogies, but also significant differences, in respect of how the embargo break takes shape in the journalistic coverage of the *Laudato si'*, and in which way it has been evaluated by the five key informants.

a) “What happened”

The first item recurs in both our researches, even though it concerns different topics and assumes

diverse tones in the shift from content analysis to key informants' interviews. In the journalistic coverage, in fact, what happened means primarily describing the events timeline: draft publication → Father Lombardi's reaction → Magister's replay → collateral effects (the economic damage for Vatican Publishing House and the mole hunt in Vatican). In particular, it is interesting to underline that in the journalistic coverage the shift from *reporting news* to *proposing views* does not take shape, and it happens not only the day after the embargo break, but also in the following days. On the contrary, key informants focus on what "embargo" means in absolute terms and especially referring to religious news. In particular, they consider news embargo as a useful tool, which allows Vatican journalists to do better their work. Therefore, on one hand *what it happened* tends to be described in terms of news reporting, on the other hand it is explained in terms of what it means from a professional point of view. At the same time, while newspapers coverage tend to use neutral tone to report the events, key informants tend to take a stand.

b) *"Why it happened"*

In respect of the second item, there is a meaningful analogy about the reasons quoted in both textual corpuses: journalistic reasons and not journalistic ones. In fact, both journalistic coverage and key informants refer the embargo break to the anti-Bergoglio internal opposition (not journalistic reasons) and underline that there are some journalists and news media (for example, *L'Espresso* media group) which tend to give voice to it (journalistic reasons). However, in the first case (newspapers coverage), journalistic reasons take shape as appendix of not journalistic ones, while in the second case (key informants' interviews), journalistic reasons and not journalistic ones are strictly related, and in respect of them interviewed journalists underline that advocacy positions profoundly contrast with journalism aims and mission.

c) *"What it means"*

Meaningful analogies between the two analysed textual corpuses take shape also in respect of the third item, concerning both above mentioned topics and the journalists' stance about them. In both cases, in fact, journalists tend to take a stand, and they usually disapprove embargo break because it damages the fairness any journalist should have in the relationship

with sources and colleagues. From this point of view, we need to underline that the findings of both researches highlight only marginally the critical point related to the relationship between journalists and their audience. This appears to be at the same time surprising and significant, in the light of what is considered the main purpose of journalism in a democratic context: the public interest.

Finally, both journalistic coverage and key informants try to explain the meaning of embargo violation in the shift from juridical rules and professional practices. Independently from its being or not an established rule, news embargo refers to professional ethics and its break represents a lack of fairness between journalists.

5. Conclusion

In the paper introduction we stated that covering religious news (and even more the Vatican one) forces journalists to respect specific rituals (for example the news embargo), which tend to re-define the idea of "scoop" and influence their news-management. Starting from these premises, we wondered in which way the practice of embargo in Vatican journalism is consistent with a trustee model whose "principal" (Goffman, 1981) is represented by citizens.

In order to answer our research question, we need to start from what our researches show in respect of that particular process through which news is built within the Holy See. In Vatican as in most institutional contexts, in fact, "news" consists of two main typologies of events: on one hand the official documents and public statements of the Pope and of Curia's members; on the other hand, news that leak out of the Vatican, and that are attributable to the "ins and outs" of the political dimension of Vatican as a state and as the regulatory center of Catholic Church.

The specific features of Vatican news affect in depth its journalistic coverage. Firstly, in fact, the official documents are complex both for their content and their form, and furthermore – and above all – because they are addressed to more than a billion believers worldwide. Secondly, because of the structural spiritual aspect, the political ins and outs cannot be considered as "normal" political opposition, but have to do with the dimension of "sin". The third feature, finally, that appears as a result of the previous two, concerns how the official Vatican organs (the

Holy See Press Room and, partly, the Vatican Publishing House) manage events and news: this management appears to be strict and severe regarding both access to places and documents, and penalties for those who break the rules.

For these reasons, in our opinion, the “Vaticanist” appears to be very similar to an *embedded journalist*, that is, in its original meaning, the news reporter attached to military units involved in armed conflicts. This kind of journalism has been conceived to ensure that news media could cover war zones, witnessing firsthand what was happening, by delegating the army to transport and protect reporters. However, embedded journalism is often criticized from the point of view of news objectivity and credibility, because the journalist appears to be strictly dependent on one of the involved parties, and his reporting is therefore restricted to what is endorsed by the military top brass (Cunningham, 2003; Löffelholz, 2008; Sweeney, 2009).

Referring to Schudson’s (1998) classification, embedded journalism can be considered as a structural *advocacy journalism*, which aims to report only one point of view, which is the one related to the party it depends on. On the other hand, the interest of news system (and in particular of publishers) lies in the prospect to have images and links with the war zones, in order to attract public’s attention: from this point of view, embedded journalism is a *market oriented* or *market driven journalism* (McManus, 1994).

In this perspective, embedded journalism seems to represent the most faraway journalism in respect of the third model theorized by Schudson (1998): in fact, *trustee journalism*, which is considered as the most consistent with ethical journalistic values (Belsey & Chadwick, 1992; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Spalletta & Ugolini, 2011), could be respected only by a reporter who is brave, expert and economically supported enough to stay in war zones independently from the involved parties, and as a consequence free to report exactly what he sees.

If we compare embedded journalists with Vatican journalists, many analogies take shape: as well as embedded war journalists, in order to be informed about news and events the Vaticanist depends on the subject of their journalistic work. Moreover, the embargo agreement, as in the embedded war reporting and differently from other journalistic fields, is signed officially, and its break entails severe sanctions.

However, in terms of professional ethics and public service, the critical issues related to embargo appear to be not only different, but even reversed.

The respect of the embargo and of the other terms established by the Holy See Press Room, in fact, allows journalists to do their job in the most accurate and complete way, because embargo guarantees the perfect correspondence between the anticipation and the official release of a document, and above all it gives time and opportunity to deeply analyse the document, in order to explain it to the audience in the better way possible. On the contrary, the journalism, which does not respect the rules, actually takes the shape of advocacy (as the journalist becomes a militant) or is oriented to market strategies and needs of news media and book publishers.

On the basis of the findings of our researches, this significant asymmetry is primarily due to two different causes. The first is related to the structural complexity of Vatican official documents and statements. Any public statement of the Pope, even in a less formal context (such as the informal press conference that often takes place on the papal airplane), requires a greater settling in comparison with the mere chronicle of what happened.

The second cause, however, appears to be most meaningful, and is more strictly related to the specific case of the *Laudato si’* embargo break. Pope Francis appears as revolutionary because of the reforms he is implementing at different levels, and as a consequence he has several opponents within the Church. From the journalistic point of view, this situation results on one side in an overregulated system for journalists who respect the rules imposed by the Holy See Press Room; on the other side in a necessarily partisan attitude in order to access news and opinions that doesn’t have a linear transmission outward.

In consideration of the above, according to us our research question (*in which way the practice of embargo in Vatican journalism is consistent with a trustee model whose “principal” is represented by citizens*) must be answered affirming that the practice of embargo is consistent with trustee model journalism only if we replace the word “citizens” with the word “believers”, that is people whose faith imposes to accept what comes from the Pope.

The rules imposed by the Holy See Press Room appear to be particularly efficient in letting the embedded journalist have a trustee approach in order

firstly to analyse and then to inform the audience about the contents of official papal documents. In the same way, it aims to fight partisan and unfair approaches to the news coverage of Pope's activity, and as a consequence fits with news objectivity and fairness values. Nonetheless, a similar attitude might discourage, or even prevent, a real debate revolving around Pope's words and achievements, where his policies might be put into question in the interest of all citizens/believers.

Therefore, "Vatican embedded journalism" certainly represents a trustee journalism if its principals are the believers. But, while Pope talks to believers, journalists are supposed to talk to citizens. In this perspective, our conclusion has to be another question: "Vatican embedded journalism" is still a trustee journalism when its principals are the citizens?

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Supporting materials

1. The paper is the joint work of both authors. However, paragraphs 1, 2 and 4 are to be attributed to Marica Spalletta, paragraphs 3 and 5 are to be attributed to Lorenzo Ugolini.

2. The encyclical should have been officially presented at noon on 18 June 2015, in a news conference which invited speakers were Cardinal Peter Tuckson, the Metropolitan of Pergamon John Zizioulas, professor John Schellnhuber, the President

of Catholic Relief Services Carolyn Woo and Valeria Martano, a teacher for 20 years in the outskirts of Rome.

3. For example, the public debate host in the website of the Italian Catholic Journalists Association (www.ucsi.it).

4. *Avvenire* belongs to the Italian Episcopal Conference, while *L’Osservatore Romano* is the official daily newspaper of Vatican City State.

5. The only exceptions are represented by *Il Sole 24 Ore*, which is the main Italian economic daily newspaper, and the general interest daily newspaper *Il Tempo*.

6. Father Federico Lombardi, s.j. was at that time the director of the Holy See Press Office.

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