

Introduction

New Nordic Journalism Research

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The technological and economic changes in the media industry – experienced on a global scale – also pose far-reaching challenges to journalism as a societal institution in the Nordic countries. One vital element is the increasing dominance of free market economics, combined with media concentration and transnational media corporations. This development is linked to the dramatic changes connected with digitalisation, convergence, and the growth of the Internet and online publishing. Free papers, new social media and new forms of interactivity have led to changing media habits and new ideas concerning journalism and civic engagement. Editorial responsibilities, ethical questions, professional roles and source relations are at the heart of the debate – and challenge traditional ideas about the roles of journalism and news media in society.

Journalism studies has been a research area at Nordic universities for many decades. In the pioneer years they were represented mostly by press studies as part of the social sciences or the humanities; later, they were more directly linked to professional education programmes for journalists. Today, at most Nordic universities, journalism research is integrated and organised within the wider, inter-disciplinary field of media and communication studies.

Generally this has been, and still is, a stimulating academic environment for journalism research. However, in a rapidly changing environment there is an increased need for contact and cooperation between senior researchers, post-doctoral fellows and PhD-students who want to concentrate and specialise their research in topics related directly to the news institution, journalism and political communication.

The Nordic Research Network in Journalism Studies, financed by NordForsk from 2009–2013, has been an attempt to establish such a forum in the Nordic area with the specific aim of developing contacts between senior and younger researchers, thereby serving the research-training needs of PhD students. An important aim of the seminars has been to inspire and activate debates about new phenomena in journalism, and journalism research, and to open new avenues of research. The initiative to establish the network was taken by the Department of Journalism, Media and Communication (JMK) at Stockholm University (since 2012 JMK is a section of the Department of Media Studies), with Sigurd Allern as the project leader. The 66 participants, a majority of them women, include 29 senior researchers and 37 PhD students from 14 different universities in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Estonia and Lithuania.

It has been the aim of the Nordic Research Network in Journalism Studies to provide a common forum for researchers within this cross-disciplinary research area. A primary concern has been to provide a network for doctoral research and to arrange seminars and workshops of direct relevance to PhD students in the field. This has meant close contact with the doctoral schools and programmes in the Nordic and Baltic countries.

From 2009–2013, the Nordic Research Network in Journalism Studies has arranged seven research seminars on specific aspects of the challenges faced by journalism research. A major part of these seminars has been workshops for doctoral students and discussions related to paper presentations. The seminars have all featured prominent researchers from outside the Nordic area as keynote speakers. They include professors Rodney Benson, Robert Entman, Natalie Fenton, Dan Hallin, Paolo Mancini, Robert W. McChesney, David Miller, Steve Paulussen, David Ryfe, Jane B. Singer, Colin Sparks, Gaye Tuchman, Baldwin Van Gorp and Karin Wahl-Jørgensen. In addition to the keynotes, there has been a long list of speakers from the Nordic countries, who have presented new journalism research. These seminars have been arranged at Stockholm University (three occasions), the University of Oslo, the University of Copenhagen, the University of Jyväskylä and the University of Bergen, in cooperation with doctoral schools, research projects and the relevant departments. Members of the network have also initiated research cooperation and organised panels at international conferences.

In the Spring of 2013, an editorial committee of senior researchers invited current and former PhD students in the network to propose articles, in most cases related to their doctoral projects, for a book on new journalism research. The present volume of *Nordicom Review* represents a selection of these papers, chosen by the editorial committee after a meticulous peer review process. The prime criterion for the selection was novelty of the ideas and approaches presented in the papers. We want to thank all the peer reviewers, senior scholars from four of the Nordic countries and Estonia, for their work.

Opening this special issue, Jonas Ohlsson in ‘Boardroom Empires?’ analyses a classical topic: how ownership impacts the performance of the press. However, despite the attention devoted to the perceived consequences of ownership, detailed information on how newspaper owners actually run their businesses is limited. Ohlsson analyses the decision-making of the boards of three Swedish newspapers from 1955–2005. He does so based on board meeting minutes and interviews with board members. The study shows that the impact of ownership is continuously constituted within an intricate web of interacting forces, internal and external to the firm.

Several of the articles in this volume take up challenges connected with the development of online news media. The Nordic countries still have a strong printed press compared with most countries in the world. However, circulation has decreased and economic difficulties have led to staff reductions in most media houses. After more than a decade of free online news, and limited income from advertisements, the erection of various kinds of paywalls restricting access to news stories and features have been one of the reactions. This is the topic Nina Kvalheim discusses in ‘News Behind the Wall’, based on a case study of a local Norwegian newspaper. What are the commercial strategies behind the change and what does it mean in terms of editorial content? Kvalheim analyses the news values behind the paywall in relation to the chosen commercial strategies.

In their article ‘Mapping Online Journalism in Transition’, Jannie Hartley and Christoph Houman Ellersgaard look into the development of the relationship between online news and their corresponding print or broadcast versions within a constructed Danish “field of news” from 2008–2010. Their point of departure is Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of field, capital and positions of autonomy and heteronomy. By applying a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) on data from a content analysis, they map the transformation graphically. This mapping shows a gained autonomy for online news in relation to their “parent platforms,” but also an increasing dependency on news agency stories.

Aske Kammer discusses ‘Audience Participation in the Production of Online News’ in the context of Danish online news production. He claims that a definition of participation has to be based on a sociological understanding of audience influence over the content. Building on an inductive study, with two different cases, he suggests four ideal types of audience participation in the production of online news: information, collaboration, conversation and meta-communication.

In ‘Innovation of New Revenue Streams in Digital Media’, Jens Barland describes how new revenue streams are being developed around journalistic products. This is based on a case study of the Schibsted Media Group, with VG (Norway) and Aftonbladet (Sweden) as examples. Unlike earlier advertising models, the media company itself has become both the advertiser and the owner of the promoted services. Journalistic content becomes the gateway to other digital services made available by the same media company.

Recent public debate has pointed to the fact that within cultural journalism the practice of criticism has emerged into a period of crisis; one claim is that there has been a move away from reviewing artistic products in their own right. Maarit Jaakkola, in ‘Diversity through Dualism’, examines the Finnish case during the period 1978–2008; she finds an increase in the managerial control of cultural journalism. This is linked to the development of in-house news production and a strengthening of the journalistic paradigm, whereas opinionated journalism, including criticism, is increasingly outsourced.

In ‘Changing Magazine Journalism’, Brita Ytre-Arne analyses key developments in a selection of Norwegian women’s magazines during the last decade. Based on multiple-data sources and methodologies, she identifies five key trends: fragmentation, digitalization, inspiration, redefinition of the political, and beautification. Her findings are discussed in relation to relevant Nordic journalism research orientations.

Magnus Danielsson in ‘Shaming the Devil!’ presents a theory-driven analysis of the performativity of shaming in investigative TV-journalism. His research, based on a study of the Swedish TV programme “Uppdrag granskning,” proposes three categories of shaming. Danielsson argues that the social construction of shame is an important factor when it comes to investigative TV-journalism’s objectives of establishing moral standards, exercising social control, reinforcing journalistic identity and ideology, and competing for attention.

In the article ‘A Small Exclusive Circle’, Carl-Gustav Lindén discusses the making of business news. His empirical material consists of interviews with senior business journalists in Finland and Sweden as well as with communication managers at Nokia and Ericsson. All the interviews were conducted during the period of 2005–2010. Lindén finds that the power dynamics between the corporations and business reporters are complex and communicative outcomes are not possible to predict. In certain periods,

corporate power seems to have strong influence over the news processes but in other periods the business reporters seem to be in charge.

Kari Koljonen presents a study on the change in the Finnish journalistic ethos. In ‘The Shift from High to Liquid Ideals’, he argues that a fundamental change has occurred. The ethos of the 1970s and 1980s, with values such as objectivity, public service and consensus maintenance, has become “liquid” and is now centred upon ideals such as subjectivity, consumer service and agenda-setting. Koljonen discusses five key elements for developing a more nuanced analytical framework to understand the shifts in the professional ethos of journalism.

To close this special issue, Helle Sjøvaag, in ‘Journalistic Autonomy: Between Structure, Agency and Institution’, investigates the concept of autonomy within the journalistic institution. The author uses a review of literature to address the question of limits for professional autonomy. She concludes that it is a fluid concept, restricted at the political, economic and organisational levels, negotiated at the editorial level and exercised at the level of practise.

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