

University of Groningen

## Introduction: Journalism coming into being

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*Published in:*  
The Institutions Changing Journalism

**IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.**

*Document Version*  
Final author's version (accepted by publisher, after peer review)

*Publication date:*  
2022

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Eldridge II, S. (Accepted/In press). Introduction: Journalism coming into being: The timbers and planks of a changing institution. In P. Ferrucci, & S. A. Eldridge II (Eds.), *The Institutions Changing Journalism: Barbarians inside the gate* (pp. 1-14). Routledge.

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In: Patrick Ferrucci & Scott A Eldridge II (Editors) *The Institutions Changing Journalism: Barbarians inside the gate*, 2022, Routledge.

## **Introduction:**

### **Journalism coming into being: The timbers and planks of a changing institution**

**Scott A. Eldridge II**

**Abstract:** *What are we referring to when we say 'journalism'? In this introductory chapter, I will explore various threads that allow us to think about journalism as something that is ontogenetic, or constantly coming into itself, constantly becoming. Using the classic thought experiment of 'the ship of Theseus', this chapter explores institutional approaches to understanding journalism. It juxtaposes discussions of journalism as something stable, with recognition of the many changes the field has undergone. It offers a conceptual roadmap interweaving institutional discussions with those from field theory to present an argument for adjoining legacy and novelty when thinking about journalism nowadays. In doing so, it highlights the aims of this book, which is to consider how new institutions that are now endemic to journalism can be thought of as part of journalism's constant, ongoing, process of becoming.*

When we say 'journalism'<sup>1</sup>, what are we referring to? Perhaps an awkward start to a book that is deeply concerned with journalism, but in light of slipping threads binding journalism's central tenets, it is a question that has gained renewed attention. In witnessing and studying what has changed over our decades of speaking about journalism, it reflects ongoing struggles to outline the shape of journalism. Whether addressing the definitional boundaries defining its space or making sense of new entrants' place within it, it reflects a lack of certainty over what journalism was historically and what it is now. On one level, this question reflects a challenge of description, as in larger and smaller ways the journalism we see around us is hardly recognizable when compared to its forebears. Media technologies have changed, as has the nature of news work. The roles journalists find themselves performing have changed, as have the ways in which these manifest, as have the ways people access news and content.

Dig a bit deeper and the question becomes more fundamental, as dependencies of journalism on its own and other institutions in society have become more complex, blurring distinctions that used to separate the institution of journalism from those surrounding it. Where two decades ago new actors and institutions from 'j-bloggers' (Singer 2005) to audiences (Singer 2009) were seen as outsiders challenging the field, as 'barbarians' storming its gates (Singer 1997) and threatening the independence of journalism itself (Singer 2007), in this book we posit that these interlopers are now firmly within the field.

However, the fact that such outsiders now appear to be more firmly seated within our conversations about journalism does not mean their place within the field is clear, nor does it resolve the uncertainty that always accompanies change, uncertainty in what we mean by 'journalism' when we say it, when we study it, and as we account for change after incremental change, what we imagine "journalism"<sup>2</sup> to be becoming. In this book we will address these changes, and how they shape our imaginations of journalism. From the material changes to how journalism reaches us, to the societal changes underpinning its place in our lives, we approach change in this volume by examining how different institutions have come to play a greater role in shaping the field of journalism. As Patrick Ferrucci outlines in his conclusion, this includes embracing a research agenda that seeks to make sense of the drivers of change themselves, looking not just at journalism but those institutions coming into its orbit. In this introductory chapter I establish key conceptual landmarks that can be used to navigate change after subsequent change. In doing so I argue that adjoining our emphasis on what was to our attention on what is offers an opportunity to see journalism as something that is constantly becoming.

### **Journalism's changing planks**

To begin, we can imagine journalism as a modern-day 'Ship of Theseus' (Scaltsas 1980). In this classic thought experiment we are asked to imagine a hypothetical ship, floating in a harbor as a tribute to the triumphs of its captain, Theseus. Over time, each of its wooden planks slowly rots and is replaced, one by one, with a new, identical piece of wood, so as to maintain Theseus' legacy as it had originally been remembered. As each plank is renewed, however, questions surface about whether the original ship is being preserved, or if it is instead becoming something new. If so, at what point does Theseus' ship cease to be *Theseus'* ship? And, at what point does it become a new ship entirely? Perhaps not when the first plank has been replaced, as it is still mostly the original ship, but what about two? Ten? Fifty? Does it become a 'new ship' when the majority of its planks and timbers are new, or only when the last original piece has been replaced?

The answers to these questions tend to differ, as people grapple with the nature of identity and existence. While on the surface a ship with one plank replaced seems largely the same, a ship with all its planks replaced seems quite different. And while a ship's legacy and purpose can be reflected in new pieces, they are, nevertheless, new, and at that level can signal something altogether different. Philosophers ask whether it matters whether change is gradual, rather than sudden, and whether the nature and identity of being Theseus' ship is tied not to its make-up, or to each of its original components, but to the historically imbued specific purpose and identity each plank represents. Is a ship's identity one that can survive incremental and, eventually, total change, so long as each new plank refers to its predecessor in some symbolic

fashion? If each new piece is a testament to the ship's original purpose, is that purpose maintained, no matter the scale and scope of change?

These questions about incremental change and original purpose are analogous to our aims with this book, exploring whether referring to 'journalism' continues to hold clear symbolic meaning and purpose as newer and newer planks contribute to its shape. From new legal concerns (Peters, this volume), to political actors (Figenschou and Ihlebæk, this volume), civic organizations (Baack, Cheruiyot, and Ferrer-Connill, this volume), modes of knowledge production (Hermida, Varano, and Young, this volume), and revenue streams (Konieczna, this volume; Li, this volume), the new considerations we need to account for in understanding journalism are many, and each adds new complexities. In other versions of this thought experiment, philosophers ask what if each rotted timber is replaced with one made of metal, acknowledging a different technology might stand the test of time a bit better (Biro 2017; Worley 2019). With historical markers of journalism now being replaced by newer technologies, where media platforms (Russell and Vos, this volume), technologically-inclined actors (Hepp and Loosen, this volume), modes of measuring traffic (Belair-Gagnon, this volume) and engagement (Nelson and Wenzel, this volume), provide audiences new voice (Banjac, this volume), can we say journalism is still the same thing we previously referred to? And as journalism continues to undergo change after change, what do we do when it has been entirely rebuilt?

Through this analogy, we can approach journalism as a ship defined on the one hand by the historically imbued value and purpose it has long benefited from, and by the continuous transformations that it has endured on the other. From print technologies to those of the web, and from mass media newspapers and broadcasters to a range of digital outlets, we can identify change quite readily. What can be harder to pin down is the enduring legacy that new institutions might *also* refer to when aligning themselves with journalism, and what their doing so means for either understanding journalism as something that remains steadfast despite newer and newer components, or as something entirely new given the raft of changes it has experienced. Through this analogy, and thinking through legacy and change, we can also confront one of journalism's recurring paradoxes; that is, journalism has benefitted from a seemingly agreed-upon social status, its legacy, even though that status is cordoned by ever-contested, ever-changing, boundaries and myriad ways of defining it. This has led us, among many, to ask why journalism has continued to matter so much, even as the ways it has mattered are so difficult to make concrete. Stephen Reese highlights this in *The Crisis of the Institutional Press*, saying journalism and the institution of journalism have historically been "notoriously difficult to define" (2021: 59). Matt Carlson and Seth Lewis (2020: 123) offer that "the questions regarding the contours of journalism lack obvious or agreed-upon answers"

(2020: 123), and separately Carlson argues that to the degree that we can understand 'journalism' through the ways we refer to it, it is a particularly "unstable referent" (2015: 8). Wolfgang Donsbach (2010) describes this in terms of a gap between journalism's clear societal importance and our abilities to define its boundaries and competencies, a task Jane Singer notes, "has never been easy and gets harder by the day" (2019: 487).

With these challenges in mind, we set about to explore where and how we make sense of something like 'journalism', which seemingly refers to a historical status and institution both imbued with purpose and value and subject to constant change. In the spaces between agreed-upon importance and elusive boundaries, and between historic legacy and newer components, however, we can see journalism constantly coming into being through interaction and change, and through revisiting what it is that has given this particular ship its identity. In doing so, we gain firmer purchase when trying to grasp what, exactly, has changed, and can better interrogate what it might be we pine for when we say 'journalism', and what it is we are newly embracing.

### **The Social Institution of Journalism: Value and stability**

If we are to begin with the legacies that give journalism status, we should unpack one of the more edificial metaphors that has been leaned on to make sense of journalism, one that will recur throughout this volume: journalism as an institution. Seeing journalism as an institution hearkens to its reputational highpoint, its era of "high modernity" (Hallin 1992), specifically in the United States and particularly in the latter twentieth century. This was, as Pamela Shoemaker and Stephen Reese describe,

a period when newswriters pledged obeisance to codes of professionalism and claimed their news coverage was independent of the financial interests of the large corporations, then beginning to consolidate their grasp on the media landscape and eventually to hold it in thrall. (Shoemaker and Reese 2014: xi)

In this setting and during this period, the institution seemed clear, and much of the work that has peered through the institutional lens towards journalism has built from this moment to address either US contexts,<sup>3</sup> or stretched a particular US-centric conception of the institution further afield. Reese (2021: ix) notes this partly reflects different traditions that took hold in the academy in the US, where a cultural studies tradition was prevalent in journalism scholarship, and the critical theoretical traditions that took hold in Europe. As the field of journalism studies has expanded, there are fewer ties between theoretical and geographic 'containers' within which scholars located in the US, Europe, or anywhere else, operate (Reese 2008). Where we can still see traces of these geographic 'homes', it is when institutionalism is embraced in scholars' efforts to rescue journalism from its own hand within the highly-commercial media

systems of the US (Alexander, Butler, and Luengo 2016), or when examining journalistic institutions in the context of US-style commercialization (e.g. in Australia; see Harrington 2021). Henrik Örnebring captures this, noting that while Reese's (2021) reflections on the crisis facing the journalistic institution list towards a US-centered understanding, they highlight the implications of "hav[ing] given a private institution a public role" (2021: 2). In other words, while this act of 'having given' might not be an exclusively US dynamic, it often has a uniquely American flavor.

Metaphorically, describing journalism as an institution suggests status, and stasis. This is not incidental. Reese notes institutions depends on this. "Institutions are stable by definition," he writes, adding: "But stability alone is not sufficient to lay claim to public support and full institutionality" (2021: 62). For that, stability needs also to be met with public acknowledgement of the value an institution holds. In Shoemaker and Reese's hierarchy of social influences, this manifests for journalism through,

a relatively homogenous social practice, with similar concerns over legitimacy and commercial success, glossing over organizational differences in favor of making broader statements about the media in general, considering how journalistic practices are more alike than different. (2014: 99)

In this definition, we see stability in journalism's shared concerns and adherence to alike practices, and value in terms of both legitimacy and commercial success.

Alongside allusions to value and stability, institutionalism also emphasizes interaction. In particular, the institution of journalism depends on interaction between journalism and other external, 'extra-media' institutions. As Shoemaker and Reese write:

The *social institution* level describes the influences arising from the larger trans-organizational media field, how media organizations combine into larger institutions that become part of larger structured relationships as they depend on and compete with other powerful social institutions. (2014: 8)

This interactivity has been expanded upon within other strands of institutionalism as well. New institutionalism, in particular, offers ways of describing journalism as a political institution through its interactions with politics (c.f. Cook 1998; Sparrow 1999). Discursive institutionalism offers another path, showing where discursive interaction undergirds a sense of journalism coming into formation through the ways it is discussed and described collectively (Hanitzsch and Vos 2017; c.f. Schmidt 2010).

Across these approaches to seeing journalism through an institutional lens, there is an effort to build from individuals, to organizations, to a sense of something more substantive in what we

refer to when we say 'journalism' by looking at how value and stability are shaped interactively. We might even be so bold as to think of the institutional label as a shorthand for the complex social interactions that drive shared practices among practitioners. Institutionalism is perhaps at its contradictory best when downplaying the status of the institution itself, and focusing more on the practices that give it shape. Laura Ahva argues such attention to practice can help avoid an "overemphasis of the role of institutions or norms" (2017: 1525), especially when trying to account for journalistic actors outside more-established organizational settings. Practices reinforce the *social* in institutions, offering a window into how individuals' routines can shape our perceptions of journalism as an institution, practices that can be shared by both more formal and more peripheral journalistic actors.

What this greater emphasis on interaction and influence encourages, and what Ryfe (2019), among others (Eldridge 2019) advocate for explicitly, is recognizing journalism is not now nor has it ever been, truly, a fixed space or place in our societies. Rather it is the product of an interweaving of journalism's recognized value and those actors who embrace it. It is also something that can change overtime, rendering stability a more open question. Inasmuch as journalism is an institution at all, in the end that perspective depends on all those who recognize journalism this way. Sparrow argues this recognition is built on the *appearance* of similarity; an "aggregate" of familiar approaches to doing newswork according to "shared norms and informal rules" (2006: 155). Hanitzsch and Vos reflect on this as the *articulation* of shared belonging, within "a struggle over discursive authority in conversations about the locus of journalism in society" (2017: 116). In each of these we are encouraged to consider how appearances of a consolidated idea of journalism are shaped, and not to be assumed as inherent or lasting. Within this emphasis, we can also see journalism's shape is not predicated on certain actors being involved, and rather on the role of interaction between all of those involved. These dynamics are contextual, allowing us to see journalism shaped in each moment through interactions with other social forces and actors, and disrupted by the same. Journalism operates in a space where other institutions "who may do battle with one another", each putting forward a dominant vision of society they wish to convey, and shaping each other as they do so (Bourdieu 2005: 31).

### **Institutions and fields, boundaries and borders**

Critical reflections on institutional approaches have built upon this interactivity, showing that while the institutional lens allows us to talk about 'journalism' as something coherent, that cohesion is not in and of itself explanatory, regardless tendencies towards that finding. As Ryfe has reflected:

Study after study had shown that across organization, geography, size, and kind of news outlet, the news is extraordinarily homogeneous. Why such homogeneity in the news?

Largely, this literature concluded, because journalism is defined by a shared set of organizational routines and practices. (2006: 135).

Such conclusions miss a trick, Ryfe argues, one embedded in the impetus for new institutionalist approaches. That is, “the idea of homogeneity, and that it is caused by organizational and professional imperatives, ought to be a beginning, not an end, of discussion” (2006: 135). Finding homogeneous routines and practices should offer us a jumping off place for new inquiry *into* homogeneity within the institution, and in doing so avoiding the trap of work that “simply assumed it and gone on to examine homogeneity’s various ‘effects,’ principally on policymaking and public opinion” (Ryfe 2016: 135). From this admonition we can address the appearance of similarity in certain moments for offering focal points to explore where status has been confronted by change, and where coherence has been ruptured by new institutions and actors who claim allegiance to the legacy of journalism, doing so in altogether novel ways.

This line of inquiry has been central to theoretical approaches for accounting for the relative consistency we find when trying to define and describe journalism not through metaphors of place, i.e. the *institution of journalism*, but through metaphors of space, i.e. the *field of journalism* (c.f. Benson 2006; Bourdieu 2005). In their similarities, approaches to both institutions and fields place attention on how journalism comes into being in part through individuals and organizations rallying around a dominant vision of what it is to belong. Benson (2006) makes this dialogue explicit. Reese (2021) does so as well. Both locate commonalities between their “attention to intra- and inter-field dynamics”, with clear differences between institutionalism’s “static, stable view of the journalistic space” and field theory’s “dynamic struggle, as one field tries to assert its autonomy by differentiating itself from others” (Reese 2021: 68). Each also emphasizes how as a field or as an institution, journalism benefits from a consolidated outward-facing vision of journalism to the wider public. This vision provides journalists a point around which they can measure their belonging, and a central reference to call upon when projecting an idea of journalism to society (Eldridge 2018: 107).

Both institutionalist and field approaches guide our thinking about journalism as shaped by societal interaction, including by focusing on inter-, intra-, and extra- media actors contesting the lines drawn around the field (Perreault and Ferrucci 2020). Shoemaker and Reese argued that both “fields and institutions bring up questions of where the boundaries lie among these institutions as they jockey for power”, and that these approaches can be conducive to building our understanding of journalism, as: “Whether between fields or institutions, borders have become particularly relevant” (2016: 402-403). Indeed, borders have been something of a concern not only in thinking through field and institutional metaphors for understanding



journalism, but in considering how such boundaries are effectively exertions of power, resisting change and drawn by tradition (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2014). It was a similar focus on power that inspired Reese's institutional curiosity (2021: xi), further embedded in theorizations of the journalistic field among 'fields of power' (Bourdieu 2005).

For institutions or fields, while attention on boundaries has been a fruitful avenue for understanding journalism alongside change, the lines themselves pose a further complication to thinking through journalism while remaining cognizant of both legacy and change. Boundaries tend to place attention on the distinctions being drawn, rather than on the interactive forces and motivations behind them (Eldridge, 2019: 9). Cook (2006: 16) reflects on this as a possible negative outcome of his own work, writing: "Thinking of the news media as a political institution, I fear, emphasizes the image of walls too much and downplays the portrait of interpenetrating journalistic and governmental realms too much". Later work, perhaps mindful of this lament, made these dynamics more central to discussions of journalism, and boundaries, including in work conceptualizing such boundaries (Carlson and Lewis 2015, 2020), making sense of how these are challenged (Eldridge 2014), again and again (Nygaard, 2020), by actors seen as internal and external to journalism (Banjac and Hanusch 2020), and those found someplace in-between (Belair-Gagnon and Holton 2018). This has, at least to a degree, moved our conversations away from focusing on journalism as either static, or bounded by stable lines, and has drawn our attention towards the "interpenetrating" forces that have given journalism at moments an appearance of stability, and at others the impression of a field undergoing immense change. But there seems to be space for more being done in this trajectory.

Returning to our analogous ship, we are reminded that despite their contributions to our shared understandings of journalism, history and legacy are impermanent, and "that institutions, just because they have certain enduring attributes, do not automatically deserve to endure in the same form" (Reese 2021: vii). Or, put differently, while "institutions persist" (Sparrow 2006: 152) and so too might the institution of journalism, this does not say anything about how it will persist. Planks will be replaced, and newer ones might call into question whether or not we are referring to the same thing we once were. Institutional approaches to journalism, then, might best be seen as a jumping off place. They allow us to see that even though there are points of similarity across journalism's disparate actors and organizations, homogeneity is not alone an answer and the institution is itself more concept than concrete.

Nevertheless, as a way of reflecting on 'journalism', the institutional lens allows us to indulge curiosity, and to examine legacy and change in finer detail. While change can call into question journalists' identities (Ferrucci and Vos 2017), and our bases for reckoning with the field at large (Eldridge 2019), focusing on how change reflects tradition can also help us make sense of

journalism as a field in society that has frequently mapped its socio-informative functions and public contributions to new modes of delivery (Conboy 2021: 11; Conboy and Eldridge 2017: 171). The back-and-forth between historical value and new imaginations also allows us to mark transition from an era of “high modernity” (Hallin 1992), appreciating the foundation for journalism’s esteem and professional repute, to the more uncertain times we now find ourselves in, with journalism “experiencing upheaval and uncertainty in many parts of the world” (Carlson et al. 2018: 7).

In the absence of certainty and clear boundaries, approaching journalism through looking at what has changed offers a way to recognize what we are building from and what feels familiar. This appreciates that despite its legacy in our modern societies, many of our understandings of journalism have rested not on strict criteria, but on a sense of familiarity between participants in the field. Whether that is familiarity in terms of their identities (Aldridge and Evetts 2003), routines (Konow-Lund 2019), organizations (Riedl 2021), or interpretations of news (Zelizer 1993), familiarity helps us see how many of our conversations about journalism are built on a tacit agreement journalists are doing something distinct, societies’ agreement to shared reference points of what journalism is, and other institutions’ agreement to abide the boundaries that have thus far maintained journalism’s shape. By seeing familiarity not as a superficial recognition, but as the product of interactions between institutions and actors adds substance to the way we study journalism, allowing us to see how a casual recognition of ‘journalism-as-something-familiar’ underlies a more complex understanding of the dynamics that shape that familiarity.

There is a point, however, where a comfortable, familiar, sense of journalism begins to falter, and that is when it runs headlong into new institutions surrounding the field which are becoming more firmly situated within its boundaries. While on the one hand we can find some solace in recognizing that journalism’s traditional timbers supporting the field continue to provide inspiration to new actors who seek to also be seen as journalists (Eldridge 2014), on the other there remains something unsettling about the amount of change that overlay this shape; the new and newer planks shaping its composition differing so wholly from their predecessors, in their form and function and modes of operation (Tandoc 2019). Responses tend towards a focus *either* on old timbers in ways which mourn their passing, or on newer planks which confront legacy with rebirth (c.f. Conboy and Eldridge, 2014). The former privileges a historically imbued status of journalism, centered around a purpose-driven approach to informing the public and holding power to account. But it risks prioritizing tradition in guiding our evaluations of new actors and new institutions. The latter encourages us to recognize that any historical impression of journalism was itself shaped by influences internal and external to the actual work of journalists and journalism, and that any idea of a stable institution of

journalism is built upon “fundamental complicities” that smooth over these dynamics (Bourdieu 2005: 36). But this can lead to a too-expansive imagination of journalism that renders its boundaries meaningless in order to wrap in all novel approaches.

### **Journalism, a ship coming into being**

Perhaps this needn't be an either-or proposition, in favor of either tradition or that which is new. Looking between tradition and novelty, as we do in this volume, can lead us to recognize, and not for the first time (Zelizer 1993), that we can gain a deeper understanding of journalism from observations of change when these are weighed against tradition, with each playing a role in the complexity of interactions shaping our societies (Eldridge and Bødker 2019). This shifts our attention from the observation of what has emerged, or what has changed, towards interactions, conceptually and materially, between the familiar and the new, between tradition and alternatives, and between exogenous and endogenous forces within and without the journalistic field that have long shaped our understanding of 'journalism'. At any given moment, this helps us see how journalism is defined by pointing to its historical claims of independence (Karppinen and Moe 2016; Tuchman 2014: xi), while also acknowledging its “structured dependency relationships with other major systemic players: including the state, public relations, and advertising” (Reese and Shoemaker 2016: 402), and new technological platforms which have “become themselves institutional actors” (Reese 2021: 20).

If we are able to take up this shift to adjoin tradition and change, we can then permit ourselves to think of journalism as something neither fully tied to a historical tether, nor fully needing to accommodate each new change agent. Rather, we can see journalism as ontogenetic; a journalism in a constant “state of becoming” (Kitchin 2017: 18).<sup>4</sup> This gives us latitude to think of journalism as something that is “never fixed in nature, but [is] emergent and constantly unfolding”, and allows us to recognize that journalism can be morphologically distinct from other aspects of our societies and trade on its long history, as long as we recognize it is also something that is defined “contextually, reactive to input, interaction and situation (Kitchin 2017: 21).

Such an ontogenetic approach aligns with much of our scholarly reflection on 'journalism', as working within this field we are constantly in a space where we need to assess context (De Maeyer and Le Cam 2014) and reactions to contexts (Godler 2020), input (Steensen 2019), and interactivity (Zamith 2019) in the many situations in which we define journalism as an object of study we are all concerned with (Eldridge et al. 2019). This shifts attention from the traditional walls which have been the focus of our own and colleagues' attention, towards the interpenetrating forces that have rendered the walls if not obsolete, permeable. This encouragement towards journalism as “constantly unfolding” also aligns with calls to de-center

our thinking about ‘journalism’ away from those with institutional largesse (Schapals, Maares, and Hanusch 2019), away from the geographical contexts where attention is most often paid (Mitchelstein and Boczkowski 2021), and even away from journalism itself (Broersma 2019). It allows us to make sense of this ship we have in front of us, and the mix of older timbers and newer planks that keep it afloat.

While seeing journalism as something that comes into being, constantly, can be an intellectual comfort as it draws from the best traditions of journalism scholarship that weigh its history alongside its development, it is also quite demanding to reorient from seeing change as disruption to seeing change as a process of “becoming”. To some, this will seem to be an abandonment of legacy, and of the stability that gave journalism as an institution its status and regard. However, permitting ourselves to think about any particular object of journalism through both similarities with other markers of belonging (including tradition) and difference between actors and approaches (including technological novelty), we can then consider how each plays a role in defining journalism’s place in society. Seeing journalism as constantly becoming recognizes that we can reorient our understanding of journalism in uncertain times by working *through* its fluctuations, defining journalism through the way small differences and dynamics of constant change have shaped both journalism’s societal position and our perceptions of it. Journalism is neither a ship that has changed, nor one that is changing into something. It is one that is in a constant process of taking shape.

The chapters that follow explore institutions that each, in their own way, call into question what we mean when we talk about ‘journalism’. Each asks us to refine our thinking as we reflect on changes journalism has experienced, and where we can benefit from re-examining what we are referring to when we say ‘journalism’. In doing so, we consider boundaries, fields, and institutions more complexly, using the conceptual tools we have in front of us to measure both legacy and novelty, and to consider both tradition and change, each, as factors affecting how journalism takes shape. In doing so, we see a journalism confronted by new actors and how these confrontations set the stage for dynamics of boundary challenging, crossing, and revision that have allowed us to see journalism through new lenses, through the changes it has experienced. As Jane Singer writes in theorizing digital journalism, we are best advised to recognize that journalism is not now, if it ever had been, a “fixed object of study”, for “the digital environment is in some ways like Heraclitus’ river: It can never be stepped in twice, for it is constantly changing, and so are those it touches” (Singer 2021: 487). Journalism in a constant state of becoming. A ship whose planks are continuously being renewed, where with each new addition we are again asked to consider what it means when we say ‘journalism’.

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<sup>1</sup> In putting 'journalism' in scare quotes when I refer to the ways we refer to it, I am intentionally drawing on a tradition (Predelli 2003, 4) of using these to acknowledge a specific debate around the term, one that goes on between the many approaches that have been used to define it, and then to argue over its definitions.

<sup>2</sup> My use of scare quotes continues here to make it clear that in this essay I think this argument is far more interesting than quickly resolving it would be. This is also done with a nod to Carlson (2017, 204, f. 73) who muses briefly over marking 'journalism' in quotation marks so as to indicate its unstable definitions, with a nod to Morozov (2013), who himself is nodding to Lawrence Lessig. After that, it's turtle nods all the way down.

<sup>3</sup> See Ryfe (2006) and Reese (2021) for insights into this literature.

<sup>4</sup> My gratitude to Rik Smit, who raised this perspective over coffee and, by doing so, helped break a logjam in the development of this chapter.