



JOURNALISM IN AN AGE OF DIGITALIZATION AND  
GLOBALIZATION: REFLECTIONS ON THE  
ESTABLISHMENT OF GJC



Working paper  
#1 2021

Center for Global Journalism and Communication

**ODDGEIR TVEITEN**

AGDER UNIVERSITY

NLA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

# JOURNALISM IN AN AGE OF DIGITALIZATION AND GLOBALIZATION: REFLECTIONS ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF GJC

Oddgeir Tveiten  
Agder University  
NLA University College

Center for Global Journalism and Communication  
<https://www.globaljournalism.community/>

Working papers editors:  
Abit Hoxha  
Oddgeir Tveiten

GjC Working Papers, 2021: 1

# JOURNALISM IN AN AGE OF DIGITALIZATION AND GLOBALIZATION: REFLECTIONS ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF GJC

**ODDGEIR TVEITEN**

*Agder University*

*NLA nNiverswity College*

**Keywords:** Global journalism, journalism education, globalization, digital journalism

Abstract:

First in the new working paper series, this working paper addresses perspectives and ideas behind the decision to establish Center for Global Journalism and Communication. The paper first introduces some key concepts, followed by a reflection on their relevance for GJC and ending with summary reflections on potential themes to pursue jointly, moving forward.

## Introduction

Exactly when to begin the history of journalism and the place of journalism education within that frame, is a matter of opinion and definition. Let me begin with briefly referencing a few classic books that deserves attention when reflecting on this issue: [John Hartley's Understanding News](#), [Mark Fishman's Manufacturing the News](#), [Teun Van Dijk's News Analysis](#), and [Gaye Tuchman's Making News](#). All of these texts are available. They are considered seminal texts. And they all address the issue of how journalism and news texts reflect back upon its various conditions of various of production. To define the beginnings of journalism is in many respects a question of tracing these shifting conditions of production, dissemination, flow, and consumption and reproduction.

In teaching journalism we sometimes refer to [the invention of the printing press](#), the [coming of the news agencies](#), the [professionalization of news journalism](#) in the context of globalization, or in the more classical sense as once discussed by [Walter Lippmann](#) (1922). We might refer to the first courses in journalism offered at [Columbia University around 1910-15](#). These and other references often come with the implied significance that they reflect deep societal change and are in some ways part of that change: The [coming of the book](#), the [coming of telegraphed messages over long distances](#), the coming of [radio, TV](#), and the [Internet](#). It is -- in a sense -- "[transition](#)" all the way; [technology-driven](#) transition with political undertones and [ideological overtones](#).

When we defined "transition" as a key term in the framework of establishing the Center for global journalism and Communication, we were first of all looking to focus on contemporary issues and concerns. However, in the understanding that history is as much an aspect of the present as it is an aspect of the past, historical accounts and broadly sweeping social theory is the key to understanding current issues.

Looking at contemporary social change – induced and catalyzed by communications revolutions over centuries, the term "transition" takes on both historical significance and present-day meaning. Globalizing technologies of journalism have impacts on professional practice, cultural contexts and political logistics.

Two arguments ought to be made, following this: First, to reflect on global journalism as a term requires a social theory of relevance to all these factors. Second, a sociology of journalism cannot confine itself to a narrow focus on journalism. On the contrary, it needs to refine a more elaborate theory, on the basis of accumulating empirical knowledge concerning journalism in a globalized and globalizing world.

In this introductory framework presentation we want to outline five different but related questions reflecting this literature, attempting a first round of answers that naturally -- at least hopefully -- will engender some discussion within the center concerning terms, concepts and models of global journalism often being referred to and used.

1. *1. What, exactly, is journalism?*
2. *2. How does the pre-fix 'global' come into the picture?*
3. *3. What 'transitions' are we referring to with the term transition journalism?*
4. *4. Do these questions invite challenges to prevailing journalism paradigms?*
5. *5. Do these questions challenge prevailing ideas in journalism education?*

## **What is journalism?**

Let us take these questions one at a time. The first question is also the title of an article by Mark Deuze ([2005](#)), with the subtitle "professional identity and ideology of journalists". The short version of the argument runs like this -- in a reformulated manner: *If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck it might very well be something quite different from a duck.*

In short: What journalism is, in our day and age, is a question we might want to ask more penetratingly. Entire information eco systems might look like journalistic articulations, in their format while being something entirely different in their intention and function. The first concern behind his title is the simple fact of competing journalism paradigms in operation around the world. Who gets to define what journalism is, and ought we to? The answer

might well be that "we all do", or that "the public does", or "the profession". However, the next two questions will be *how* and *why*?

If something looks like journalism and presents itself as journalism but isn't, then...well, then what? Like journalist and columnist [Paul Chadwick in the UK newspaper The Guardian wrote 15 years after Deuce's article, the key issue is not the least what journalism is for](#): "Faced with huge competition from social media, here are things that, to me, remain worthwhile in a free society."

He goes on to name a few key values of journalism, all familiar:

- 1: Societal transparency
- 2: Cultivating a wide range of informed opinion
- 3: A critically functioning public sphere
- 4: Open and vigilant critique of institutions of power

Returning to Deuce, he uses the word "lack" of coherence in our understanding of what journalism is. He refers to a number of well established journalism scholars and debates that are well known to many of us who will be reading these pages. We lack consensus, according to his argument.

The word "lack" is on the one hand a negative formulation. It could mean that not having a coherent agreement as to what journalism is, is a problem. On the other hand it is also a term suggesting a need for minimizing such deficiency, more in the sense of clarifying what it is that is comparable and in future research will be compared. In his 2005 article, Deuce notes (p.443) that the concept of occupational ideology might be a meeting point in this regard, emphasizing how socio-cultural and socio-economic issues link with "new media" and "multi-culturalism" to shape such an agenda. The inherent idea is that there ought to be definitional such a consensus.

This lack of scholarly coherence is very much an aspect of the journalism paradigm discussion we seek to raise: Why would one want to seek one common, joint understanding, in the first place? What is behind that sort of argument? The question is not meant to criticize a very good article by a complex and observant media scholar. It is merely to raise the specter of complexity in the sense of opening up that container that we call "universalizing theories of journalism". Not everything that looks like journalism is journalism. And some things that may not look like journalism might very well be just that – journalism.

The nature of theory is its provision of coherence. The nature of coherence production is at times also its potential for minimizing or overlooking paradox. Formulated that way, the first question of [what is journalism](#), is a wide and open one. To raise the question in terms of globalization and global journalism is certainly more than a [question of new globalizing](#)

[technologies](#), as noted by [Barbie Zelizer](#). It certainly invites a critique and appraisal of the accelerating expansion of information flows – with all its unanticipated impacts.

Following Deuze a bit longer one might note how these paradigm definitions reflect the balance that journalism research and education has observed between an academic university model and concepts of journalism emanating from and embedded in the industry. Deuze ([2005:443](#)) notes a "perceived clash" of concepts and ideas reflecting the fact that scholars come from within the social sciences and the humanities. The reality of competing definitions and understandings also within disciplines, networks, schools of thought that do not necessarily conform to the social science/humanities distinction ([Deuze, 2004](#)). Another factor is the political legacies of journalists and journalism institutions attached in various ways to powers that be; resulting in linkages to political parties, concerns with censorship and self-censorship, as well as a wide variety of political cultures at play. Leaving a more absorbing discussion of Deuze's points of view for another time, a final thought from his 2005 article is this one: "It is therefore safe to say that many scholars, educators and students all over the world are involved in journalism studies and education, but rarely do their approaches, understandings or philosophies meet" (2005:443).

### **About global journalism**

Understood as a "formulation paper" for the establishment of GJC, it would seem natural to reflect on some personal experiences with meeting colleagues around the world to discuss understandings and ideas: From about fifteen years of teaching journalism in East Africa I keep asking myself: Do our approaches to journalism research and education differ that much? If they do, then how? What are the featuring differences?

Clearly, we embed our understandings in different world realities, different everyday experiences and socio-economic conditions of life. From that point of view; ought we still to seek a universalizing and commonly held perspective on what journalism is? Or might we perhaps enrich our understanding of global journalism by embracing that change and difference?

In a book edited by [Chin Chuan Lee](#), called [Internationalizing "International Communication"](#), Lee (2015) notes how in a former life as staff member at a Mid-Western university in the United States anything "international" more or less meant the same as "foreign". *International* is what happens between nation-states. *Foreign* is a word with many-layered meaning. "Abroad" is one of them. "Strange" is another one.

Understanding US journalism from that point of view might mean that only such news media as the New York Time, CNN and a few more, would be truly "international"? How about news

from the various Native American nations? Does that qualify as international? Or the *Oromo* TV station just a short drive from Professor Lee's University campus in Minneapolis?

If we are to have a consensus as to what journalism is, then certainly a better grasp of such terms as the above runs prior to that understanding. Words like 'local', 'national', 'international' and 'global' carry many different meanings. These were once key themes in our PhD seminar discussions, at the University of Minnesota, where Chin Chuan Lee taught and was my PhD supervisor. The concern is the same now: We deploy labels, but what do they mean? We think we know. Do we?

[Peter Berger](#) (2013) keeps one distinct definition in his book [Global Journalism -- Theory and Practice](#), arguing that "global journalism" is a particular kind of outlook on the world that embeds the global with the local and vice versa. As such global journalism is not "journalism about foreign affairs" or journalism about "the others" or "stuff on CNN". The argument is more profound: Global journalism is more akin to an epistemology that on some levels reflect and respond to prevailing codes of journalism in its theoretical and practiced forms, while on the other hand also is an epistemology that breaks away in its insistence to maintain an alternate definition of newsworthiness, news criteria and general agenda. To be "global" journalism, the requirement is to keep a "global" frame – in which, to paraphrase [Roland Robertson](#), the global gets embedded within the local and vice versa, creating a "[glocal](#)" world view or template frame for deciding what's news.

Let us consider what is written about Berger's book on the cover:

"Recent instances of global crisis reporting on climate change and the financial crisis are early embryos of a new form of journalism that is increasingly needed in global times: global journalism. Instead of associating global journalism with national comparisons of media systems or defining it as an ethically "corrective" form of journalism, Peter Berger sets out to develop the idea of global journalism as an epistemological updating of everyday mainstream news media. He theoretically understands and explains global journalism as a concrete practice, which can be applied in research, training, and reporting. He argues that the future of professional news journalism is about leaving behind the dominant national outlook for the sake of a more integrated (global) outlook on society."

Are we to understand that 'global journalism' is an aspect of having a global outlook on the world? Is this global outlook *a particular manner in which we articulate climate crisis, financial crisis, humanitarian crisis and conflict*? Clearly, there are some important considerations to be made.

Furthermore, to introduce concept such as "mainstream media" is to assume a certain implicit critique, quite clearly rooted in alternative journalism, social movements and political

economy perspectives on the corporate media industry of the United States in the 1970's and onward.

In sum, to define *global journalism* as an inroad to comparative perspectives in journalism research invites a highly relevant debate not only on theory and concept building but on methodology, as well. Large global studies like [Worlds of Journalism](#) employ nation-state comparisons. It offers advantages but it also raises fundamental issues about what the "global" part is. The sum of nation states? Clearly, the word 'world' stated in a plural sense in the title, is chosen carefully. As [Douglas Kellner](#) (2002) noted a long time ago, the concept of 'globalization' is both precise and vague, clear and contested. Events unfolding in a pandemic-ridden world would seem to indicate that one meaningful dialogue we might raise in GJC discourses, is the meaning of the idea of 'global journalism'. It is no more clear today than what it was at the time of.

### **What does the term *transition journalism* mean?**

The prefix 'global' is it not a small matter and neither is the prefix 'transition'. The assumption with *global journalism* for some scholars seems to be that it is 'something else', or a corrective, to *mainstream journalism*, *local journalism*, *sports journalism*, or some other kind of definition of beats, or areas of news coverage. The assumption for other scholars is fundamentally different: Global news is what happens in global news media, like CNN or Al Jazeera, the New York Times or BBC. The question then is what the term *transition journalism* offers? Is it a particular way of addressing social phenomena? Are we referring to particular media that are stakeholders in particular social contexts and circumstances? Are we referring to media that are 'transient' or "transcendent" in nature? Or is it just one more prefix coming from academia with a built-in bias towards the ways the news industry works?

[In a 2020 article, Sweeney, Andresen and Hoxha](#) begin an exegesis on the term transitional journalism by noting (2020) that news reporting in the Balkans after the 1990's civil wars seemed to play a different or *extended* role compared to 'classical journalism'. Now, from one point of view, the horrific events of the 1990's clearly invite a critical review of the operations of news media both regionally and internationally. Indeed, there are numerous studies on that matter, which also suggests that there is comparative materiality for the study of how societal transitions in various regions and times get reflected in news reporting and other documentary genres (Andresen, Hoxha and Godole, 2017). What seems to be a bit unclear from the study is the question why 'classical journalism' is a contrast to be critiqued? Or to phrase the question differently: Are we critiquing 'classical journalism' or 'badly done classical journalism'?



The article is principally an empirical investigation, carrying weight as such. However, it also provides some answers to the above issue: By going back to the more well-known term *peace journalism*, the authors contend that news media in the Balkans up and through a range of recent conflicts have played a propaganda role, contributing and sometimes catalyzing entrenched, armed conflict. They also cite Rwanda and Rwandan broadcasting as a case. In other words, there is an attempt to define a category of journalism that extends beyond the Balkan region. According to the *peace journalism* argument they argue, a feature setting it part from 'classical journalism' is its emphasis on *solutions* and *conflict/explanatory factors* that might contribute to a more speedy *conflict resolution*. The argument, once framed by [Jake Lynch and Anabel McGoldrick, inspired by Johan Galtung](#), is that journalists and editors can make editorial choices that emphasize non-violent conflict solutions rather than focusing excessively on the drama of violence (Lynch, 2014).

The peace journalism concept is a deeply penetrating argument that deserves a great deal of attention, which it to some extent has received. The transition journalism concept might be equally novel.

There is critique to be noted, however: Is the role of journalism to *advocate* or to *observe*? Where does the line get drawn: For the purpose of this discussion, we might note that transition journalism refers **not** to transitions in the media industry due to technology transition and convergence. It refers more concretely to societal upheavals and changes that may or may not be related to the tectonic movements caused by technology. Largely, the term is being deployed to signify *political and cultural transitions, embedded in history and articulated as they unfold in the unraveling of various kinds of tribal community belonging and ideological positioning*.

For the sake of building towards future discussion in this GJC center forum, we might note that what is being put on the table is on the one hand the issue of *framing*. From the point of view that peace journalism, solutions journalism and transition journalism emphasize a 'different way of telling the story,' various elements and levels of framing comes to mind. A key reference being [Robert Entman, an old but in my opinion quite classical article](#) suggest a way to move forward a discussion on how transition journalism could be fruitfully advanced without it becoming an 'either-or' discussion and straw-man-like stereotype of journalism generally (1993).

Second, beyond the discussion of framing is a more comprehensive theory of how the twin forces of globalization and digital transformations of society now also invite a discussion not so much of journalism as of those classical concepts that once framed journalism research -- within a 'national' and an 'international' understanding of society. Clearly, we are no longer there. A short illustration would simply be to refer to the role diasporas now play in numerous conflict theaters. Human communication is based on framing. Without frames we

would not communicate. Walter Lippmann said as much, in his reflections on the nature of stereotypes and “the pictures in our heads” (Lippmann, 2004).

### **The challenge to prevailing journalism paradigms**

The next question raised at the beginning of this argument was whether *these questions invite challenges to prevailing journalism paradigms?* The answer is of course yes, but the next question is what we mean with the term journalistic paradigm? In an article and also in [a later book](#), Lee and Chan (1989) observe a parallel to [Thomas Kuhn's concept of scientific paradigm](#), from a 1962 book that generally changed the ways in which we understand the progress of scientific work (Kuhn, 2012). Yet, Lee and Chan in their focus on the Hong Kong press mostly observe the existence of competing paradigms and not why they emerge and what consequences these dynamics might have.

If we were to say that political transitions are reflected in competing and co-existing paradigms, we might have a means of comparative description and a means of analyzing the impacts of that co/presence. We need something else if we are to probe deeper into the parallels however. A paradigm is in short-code a 'set of assumptions'. These can be assumptions in journalism practice, for instance. They can be assumptions in journalism research. However, in Kuhn's formulations, such paradigms are also distinguishable from what happens when they break down: When a theory or set of theories fail to explain phenomena, new theories and new approaches emerge. In that condition, Kuhn notes a tension between 'normal' science and 'revolutionary' science.

If we were to take these and other aspects of Kuhn's argument at more face value, we arrive at the understanding that both in practice and in theory, journalism paradigms are an aspect also of competing definitions and assumptions.

In that regard, one can understand transition journalism as representing a call to newer, deeper, and more salient explanatory frameworks. In so doing, it is met with curiosity, critique and also resistance.

### **Summary thoughts: Challenging journalism education**

Coming to a close and returning to the opening reflection from Deuze, as students of the media and journalism we meet and interact in research and as researchers, at conferences, in workshops, online and in various other contexts. The final concern addressed here in this working paper is simply this: We also interact as educators and in education. It would seem that transition journalism as a concept also ought to be brought into our conversations regarding journalism education.

Where does it belong in journalism education? Whose outlooks on particular conflicts are to be emphasized? Education is academic and scholarly, journalism practice in some respect something else. BA and MA education are also two distinctly different things, where the assumption of an MA level student is one of becoming a specialist in an area and seeking a more analytic future, or a managerial future in leadership.

In short, it matters what we mean when we refer to journalism education. From the point of view of a BA degree seeking know-how exposure to how to actually work in reporting, transition journalism would perhaps involve coursework in histories and contemporaries of particular conflict zones, as well as how reporters report it. At an MA level, the assumption is that students seek a deeper understanding of how particular news frames and material stakeholders combine to present agendas, vie for attention and define the public 'court of opinion' that [Benjamin Bagdikian](#) once referred to.

If education means not only to inform but also to reform, then aspects of practical capacity clearly relate to a cultivation of what Richard Rorty referred to as 'reflective citizens'.

Is this where we want to head – with GjC?

The hope being that these comments and considerations, incomplete as they are, might contribute to spurring that conversation forward.

## References

Andresen, K., Hoxha, A. and Godole, J. (2017) 'New Roles for Media in the Western Balkans', *Journalism Studies*, 18(5), pp. 614–628. doi: 10.1080/1461670X.2016.1268928.

Berglez, P. (2013) *Global journalism : theory and practice*. Peter Lang Publishing Group. Available at: <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:oru:diva-30273> (Accessed: 7 March 2021).

Chan, J. M. and Lee, C.-C. (1989) 'Shifting Journalistic Paradigms: Editorial Stance and Political Transition in Hong Kong', *The China Quarterly*, (117), pp. 97–117.

Deuze, M. (2006) 'Global Journalism Education', *Journalism Studies*, 7(1), pp. 19–34. doi: 10.1080/14616700500450293.

Deuze, M. (no date) 'Journalism studies beyond media: On ideology and identity', p. 20.

Entman, R. M. (1993) 'Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm', *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), pp. 51–58. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x.

Kellner, D. (2002) 'Theorizing Globalization', *Sociological Theory*, 20(3), pp. 285–305. doi: 10.1111/0735-2751.00165.

Kuhn, T. S. (2012) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions: 50th Anniversary Edition*. University of Chicago Press.

LEE, C.-C. (ed.) (2015) 'Index', in *Internationalizing 'International Communication'*. University of Michigan Press, pp. 325–332. doi: 10.2307/j.ctv65sxh2.19.

Lippmann, W. (2004) *Public Opinion*. Available at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/6456> (Accessed: 15 April 2021).

Lynch, J. (2014) *Peace Journalism*. Hawthorn Press.

Sweeney, J. A., Andresen, K. and Hoxha, A. (2020) 'Transitional Justice and Transitional Journalism: Case-Study on Kosovo', *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, 14(3), pp. 483–503. doi: 10.1093/ijtj/ijaa017.

GJC  
CENTER FOR GLOBAL JOURNALISM AND  
COMMUNICATION



GJC Working Papers

Series info: [Look us up here.](#)

Format info: [Do you want to publish with us?](#)

Contact info: [Look us up here.](#)