

JOURNALISM STUDIES: THEORY AND PRACTICE

Cosmopolitanism and the New News Media

Edited by
Lilie Chouliaraki and Bolette Blaagaard



Cosmopolitanism and the New News Media

The Arab Spring, the Occupy Wall Street movement and the Haiti earthquake are only some of the recent examples of the power of new media to transform journalism. Some celebrate this power as a new cosmopolitanism that challenges the traditional boundaries of foreign reporting, yet others fear that the new media simply reproduce old power relations in new ways. It is this important controversy around the role of new media in shaping cosmopolitan journalism that offers the starting point of this book.

By bringing together an impressive range of leading theorists in the field of journalism and media studies, this collection insightfully explores how Twitter, Facebook, Flickr and YouTube are taking the voice of ordinary citizens into the forefront of mainstream journalism and how, in so doing, they give shape to new public conceptions of authenticity and solidarity.

This collection is directed towards a readership of students and scholars in media and communications, digital and information studies, journalism, and sociology, as well as other social sciences that engage with the role of new media in shaping contemporary social life.

This book was originally published as a special issue of *Journalism Studies*.

Lilie Chouliaraki is Professor of Media and Communications at the London School of Economics and Political Science, UK. Her latest publications include *The Ironic Spectator: Solidarity in the Age of Post-Humanitarianism* (2013), *Self-mediation: New Media, Citizenship and Civil Selves* (ed., 2012) and *The Spectatorship of Suffering* (2006).

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Journalism Studies: Theory and Practice

Series editor: Bob Franklin, Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, Cardiff University, UK

The journal *Journalism Studies* was established at the turn of the new millennium by Bob Franklin. It was launched in the context of a burgeoning interest in the scholarly study of journalism and an expansive global community of journalism scholars and researchers. The ambition was to provide a forum for the critical discussion and study of journalism as a subject of intellectual inquiry but also an arena of professional practice. Previously, the study of journalism in the UK and much of Europe was a fairly marginal branch of the larger disciplines of media, communication and cultural studies; only a handful of universities offered degree programmes in the subject. *Journalism Studies* has flourished and succeeded in providing the intended public space for discussion of research on key issues within the field, to the point where in 2007 a sister journal, *Journalism Practice*, was launched to enable an enhanced focus on practice-based issues, as well as foregrounding studies of journalism education, training and professional concerns. Both journals are among the leading ranked journals within the field and publish six issues annually, in electronic and print formats. More recently, 2013 witnessed the launch of a further companion journal *Digital Journalism* to provide a site for scholarly discussion, analysis and responses to the wide ranging implications of digital technologies for the practice and study of journalism. From the outset, the publication of themed issues has been a commitment for all journals. Their purpose is first, to focus on highly significant or neglected areas of the field; second, to facilitate discussion and analysis of important and topical policy issues; and third, to offer readers an especially high quality and closely focused set of essays, analyses and discussions.

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Lilie Chouliaraki and Bolette Blaagaard

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PREFACE

In this special issue of *Journalism Studies*, guest editors Lilie Chouliaraki and Bolette Blaagaard host an important conversation between a distinguished group of scholars and academics, about the impact of new media in reshaping journalism. Their central concern is with the question of “how technology and power are reconfiguring the cosmopolitanising potential of journalistic reporting”, where cosmopolitanism refers to “an orientation of openness towards distant others that relies on technological mediation so as to raise the moral imperative to act on those others in the name of common humanity”. The emergence of new digital media and the increasingly widespread practices of citizen journalism which secure the “intervention of ordinary voice into journalism”—exemplified by the Arab Spring, the Haitian earthquake and the protests in Syria—have foregrounded the significance of these debates about the cosmopolitan efficacy of journalism today. I believe these essays make a substantial contribution to the academic discussion of journalism studies, but also help to clarify policy debates concerning the moral and political legitimacy of particular interventions.

I am, as ever, especially grateful to the reviewers—Professor Zizi Papacharissi, University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign, USA and Professor Stephen J. Ward, University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA—for their helpful and illuminating comments on earlier drafts of all of the papers published here.

Bob Franklin
Editor

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INTRODUCTION

Cosmopolitanism and the new news media

Lilie Chouliaraki and Bolette Blaagaard

The Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street (2011), the Haiti earthquake (2010) and the Iran elections (2009) are only some of the recent illustrations of the power of new media to change the nature of journalism. Whilst some have celebrated this power as a new cosmopolitanism that breaks down the boundaries of traditional reporting, others have responded with scepticism on the grounds that this journalism might simply be changing the ways in which power is operating in trans-national mediascapes. It is this question of how technology and power are reconfiguring the cosmopolitanising potential of reporting that offers the starting point of this special issue.

Cosmopolitanism, the issue argues, is an orientation of openness towards distant others that relies on technological mediation so as to raise the moral imperative to act on those others in the name of common humanity (Silverstone 2007). Whilst cosmopolitanism has long been associated with the capacity of journalism to bring “home” distant realities and to inspire a sense of care and responsibility beyond our communities of belonging (Hannerz 1990), the emergence of new media and their appropriation in citizen-driven practices of reporting has invigorated debates about the cosmopolitan efficacy of journalism today (Ward 2010; Zuckerman 2010). New media journalism refers to a broad economy of integrated technological mediations, what Madianou (this issue) calls a “polymedia” milieu, which “comprises of technologies, media, platforms and applications as they intersect and hybridise”, circulating information but also facilitating opinion and testimony. Within this milieu, it is, in particular, the intervention of ordinary voice into journalism, made possible through these polymedia affordances (from Twitter to mobile phones), that appears to catalyse the cosmopolitan efficacy. Insofar as events can be reported by people like us, the argument has it, the news can become both more authentic towards its own publics and more caring towards distant others (Allan 2007; Harcup 2002).

The “new authenticity” of new media journalism is, therefore, used as an umbrella term for exploring a whole set of themes about the ways in which contemporary journalism engages with questions of truth, objectivity and credibility—the traditional values of the profession. On the one hand, new authenticity points to the truth of ordinary voice as an emerging political force that promises to democratise traditional broadcasters, offering visibility to those deprived of the possibility to be otherwise heard and seen in trans-national news flows (Gillmor 2004). On the other hand, the authenticity of voice is simultaneously also seen as a convenient co-option of the people by these broadcasters, in that the incorporation of their voice into market-driven news agendas may lead not to the empowerment of the people but the re-legitimisation of news oligopolies who now speak in their name (Scott 2005). Rather than celebrated for democratising truth, journalism is here seen as manipulating ordinary voice at the service of corporate or state interests and, in so doing, compromising the constitutive values of the profession: “The paradox of the devaluation of journalism in the midst of the information society” as Scott puts it, “is simply stunning” (2005, 120). The truth of journalism is, in other words, a major stake in the debate on the cosmopolitanising potential of new media reporting.