



CHAPTER 1

Understanding Journalism Within Non-Western Contexts

Saba Bebawi and Oxana Onilov

This book was inspired by an international conference entitled *International Cultures of Journalism*. Although it was scheduled to take place in Sydney in 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic put a halt to that. However, we decided to bring together, in this collection, the studies that attracted the authors to the theme of the conference from around the world. We wanted to gather and learn about journalism in different countries. It was on purpose that we did not want to pinpoint a theme for researchers to abide to as we knew that every part of the world has its own issues and intricacies when it comes to journalism practice. For the same reason, we didn't structure the book in sections, geographically, thematically or even in format, as there are chapters that are theoretical, empirical, in addition to reflective practice. Although the chapters together provide an overview of how culture shapes a multitude of journalism practices, each chapter stands on its own.

S. Bebawi (✉)

Faculty of Arts, School of Communication, University of Technology
Sydney, Sydney, NSW, Australia
e-mail: Saba.Bebawi@uts.edu.au

© The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature
Switzerland AG 2023

S. Bebawi, O. Onilov (eds.), *Different Global Journalisms*, Palgrave
Studies in Journalism and the Global South,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-18992-0_1

Journalists in the non-Western world are trained, generally speaking, within Western models of reporting and are taught to do so as a practice these reporters need to aspire and aim for. Yet what such training is short of achieving is teaching these reporters how ‘to do’ journalism within their own environments. In turn, what is required is a method of journalistic training, and in turn practice, that is reflective of the actual practice these reporters will encounter on the ground. Although local trainers could help to address this, one way of assisting with this is better understanding how journalism is practiced in different parts of the world, the contexts surrounding such practices, the issues and challenges associated, in addition to the positive practices that Western journalism can offer. This book is an attempt to do just that—to better understand how journalism in non-Western contexts is different and learn more about these practices.

WESTERN DOMINATION AND THE ROLE OF DIFFERENT JOURNALISMS

In his book entitled *The Media Were American* (Tunstall, 2007), as a follow up to a previous book called *The Media Are American* (Tunstall, 1977), Jeremy Tunstall revisits the global media scene as a result of a changing media environment. In it, he argues that Western domination of the global scene, specifically American-based media, ‘have been in decline on the world scene for several decades’ (Tunstall, 2007: 321). He, therefore, suggests that there is an exaggeration in Western dominance and believes that this is, in fact, changing.

Nonetheless, the question that rises here is to what extent can this emerging global news space be considered to represent a ‘global public sphere’ that does not exclude any members of the global community? Historically, there have been many factors that have prevented the emergence of a global public sphere, as outlined in the NWICO debates. Such factors are slowly being addressed and facilitated as a result of developments at various levels, such as technology. In support of an emerging global space, Ingrid Volkmer views the public sphere as a ‘representative public zone’ where it is characterised as having ‘cross-cultural, cross-societal, and cross-national implications’, in other words, ‘the global space [...] can be considered as a

O. Onilov

Faculty of Arts, School of Communication, Sydney, NSW, Australia

e-mail: Oxana.Onilov@uts.edu.au

multi-discursive political space' (Volkmer, 1999: 122–123). According to Volkmer, the process of globalisation marks a change to the meaning of 'public' as understood in previous debates, where the public sphere has expanded beyond the limits of the national onto a global context (Volkmer, 1999: 122). Volkmer argues that 'the global communication sphere, involving fragmented satellite television targeting specific audiences worldwide and the Internet, provides not so much 'global' communication but particular globalized communication' (Volkmer, 2007: 58).

Here Volkmer refers to 'new discourse spheres' within the global public sphere, and introduces the concept of 'negotiated sovereignty' (Volkmer, 2007: 62): '[t]he study of political 'information flows' within the globalized sphere reveals new notions of 'sovereignty' not so much in view of a universal but an increasingly particular framework. Therefore, Volkmer considers the global public sphere to consist of smaller 'spheres of influence' where dominance is practiced within these smaller spheres which can be captured in different practices of journalism around the world that eventually make up the wider discourses of the global public sphere, as we showcase in this edited collection.

CULTURES OF JOURNALISM

It has taken many decades, on the parts of both Western journalists and journalists from the Global South, to acknowledge that journalism is not universal and nor should it be. Reporters from the Global South have always looked up to the 'Western' way of doing journalism and relied heavily on coaches and trainers from the Global North who were seen as the key to 'fixing' their journalism. Yet when these reporters return to their local newsrooms, the cultural, political, economic and ideological realities prevent them from applying what they learnt in relation to doing journalism the Western way. It has taken them a while to realise that what works in one part of the world simply cannot work in another.

Worlds of Journalism: Journalistic Cultures Around the Globe, edited by Thomas Hanitzsch, Folker Hanusch, Jyotika Ramaprasad, and Arnold S. de Beer (2019), is based on the largest, comparative study of journalism cultures around the world, *The Worlds of Journalism Study (WJS)* (<http://worldsofjournalism.org/>) which was founded in 2010. This edited collection offers an account of the study including the findings which provides an understanding of the complexity and multifaceted nature of journalism within a global context. According to the editors, there has been a general assumption on the part of Western journalism researchers that their work is applicable to those outside the Western world, yet at the same time,

researchers from the Global South face criticism for relying on scholarly work that stems from their parts of the world (Hanitzsch et al., 2019: 5). The tension, therefore, is evident, not just from a journalism training and practice standpoint, but also within a scholarly perspective. There has been a recent wave of efforts to make for a more inclusive global journalism scholarly representation from both the Global North and South with the aim of addressing the Western domination of journalism conceptualisations of training and practice, yet journalism academics from the non-Western world remain disadvantaged both financially and linguistically.

Hanitzsch argues that journalism cultures differ and are dependent on the various influences that affect the practice, namely political, economic, organizational, procedural, and personal networks influences (Hanitzsch et al., 2019: 107). Although these influences play different roles in different journalistic cultures, journalists' perceptions of these influences also differ. So, in some cultures, the 'political and economic pressures appear to be less important in journalists' perceptions because these influences are further removed from their daily practice than, for example, the influence of norms and routines' (Hanitzsch et al., 2019: 113). Furthermore, editorial autonomy is another variant since in countries where journalism is closely monitored and state controlled, 'there is no editorial autonomy in any recognizable Western form'.

This edited collection does not seek to conduct a comparative analysis between different journalisms from around the world as this presents its own set of challenges. Such challenges, at first instance, include the difficulty in finding common points of comparison which lies at the heart of what this study set out to address. This includes a 'workable definition' of who is a journalist, for example. Definitions and boundaries in relation to this, therefore, needed to be articulated to provide a comparative platform across all journalistic practices for the countries studied. Additionally, the need for finding some form of common 'theoretical universalism' could 'lead to measurement that is insensitive to context and formulates key concepts at such a high level of abstraction' that doesn't reflect the reality of practices at a local level (Hanitzsch et al., 2019: 23). Despite this, this collection of studies has taken details of difference into account to provide a comprehensive articulation of different journalistic practices around the globe. In turn, this book provides an important basis for researchers working on international cultures of journalism to build on. By acknowledging the need for an inclusive, representative global public sphere consisting of as many journalism models, this book is an attempt to learn about diverse

journalistic cultures through a collection of case studies, reflective writings, empirical studies and theoretical papers. The book seeks to cover factors that influence the development of journalism in non-Western contexts; challenges and opportunities for its training and practice; the ways technologies impact the development of distinctive cultures of journalism; and the emergence of particular models of journalism in different cultural journalism contexts.

PLAN OF THE BOOK

Following the editors' opening chapter, the contributing authors of this book explore how different practices, routines and conventions allow different cultures of journalism to become distinctly visible in non-Western countries. Together, these chapters provide an overview of how culture shapes, renegotiates, and redefines journalism practices. The book centres on journalists and their practices in different media environments and accentuates how journalists find their own ways to adjust, adapt, innovate, deal with challenges—successfully or not—in their social, cultural and political contexts embedded in non-Western environments. Through different snapshots of journalists operating and navigating multifaceted contexts, we aim to learn about *Different Journalisms* in this edited book.

Chapter 2, entitled *Harnessing Data and Digital Journalism in Latin America* by Mathias Felipe de-Lima-Santos, Lucia Mesquita, Gabriela Gruszynski Sanseverino, Giuliannder Carpes, Kamila Fernandes and Ramón Salaverría explores how the Latin American news ecosystem is evolving and reshaping the relationship between newsrooms and audiences through technology and digitalisation. Through a combination of content analysis and interviews with news organisations and practitioners in the region, the authors reveal that despite the lack of technological and research resources abundant in Western democracies, Latin American countries find their own ways to innovate and embrace novel technologies. To understand how digital journalism and data journalism have evolved in Latin American newsrooms, the authors discuss change in terms of praxis, business models, audience participation, and platforms.

Chapter 3, entitled “*Burmese Days*” of *Digitalization: From a Decade’s Dream of Myanmar’s Modern Journalistic Culture and Media System in the Making to a Press Freedom’s Nightmare of the Military Putsch in 2021* by Mandy Fox, Sascha Helbardt, Oliver Hahn and Felix Krebs describe the Myanmar media changes within the decade of transition from the end of

the military rule in 2011 to the military coup of 2021. Based on interviews with Burmese journalists, editors, media owners, academics, key activists, and key actors in the media field, the authors shed a light on the impact of this decade of transition on journalists' practice, private media companies, ethnic and exile media. The authors reflect on the emergence of a modern journalistic culture whose development was abruptly interrupted by the military coup.

Chapter 4, *Recovered Media in Argentina: A Resilient Response to Instability and Precariousness* by Carolina Escudero, examines the phenomenon of workers co-ops, abandoned or closed media outlets recovered by their workers. Based on a combination of interviews with journalists and content analysis of materials on professional and self-management experiences published by recovered media, the author investigates the phenomenon of recovered media in Argentina. The chapter delves into recovery processes and challenges, and analyses the resilience of media workers who by responding to unstable economic situations assume new roles, in addition to exercising their profession.

Chapter 5, *Uncovering the Power of Whistle-Blowing as a New Form of Citizen Journalism in Non-Democratic Countries* by Shepherd Mpofo, Bruce Mutsvairo and Trust Matsilele explore whistleblowing as an emerging form of citizen journalism in non-democratic environments. Through the case of a celebrated Zimbabwean blogger turned activist, who exposed corrupt practices among the country's political elite, the authors illustrate the intervention of digital technologies in aiding whistle-blowing styled citizen journalism. The chapter, ultimately shows how such practices have helped deepen democratic participation in Zimbabwe.

Chapter 6, *India: Mapping Journalism in the World's Largest Democracy* by Daya Thussu and Anilesh Kumar assesses the interplay between democracy and journalism in India. The authors describe the transformation of the Indian news media from state-controlled media to marketization, expansion of television news and *bollywoodization*. The multi-channel hyper-commercial media context is increasingly resulting in news content that takes the form of infotainment, and acts as an important element in shaping public discourse. This undermines the informational role of news in India, where millions of people still cannot read or write.

Chapter 7, *Social Media Use, Television News and Protest Participation: A Post-Soviet Media Culture* by Oxana Onilov focuses on the impact of social media on protest participation in the context of a post-Soviet Moldovan media context. Based on interviews with protesters and

activists, the author reveals how distrust in media and simultaneous tolerance towards it—as well as an emerging trend and strive for Western values—mediated the use of social media for participation. The author describes how social media usage is endogenous to community characteristics, contextual factors, an intergenerational divide, and the interplay of different online and offline media shape its importance for participation.

In Chap. 8, in his essay entitled *Investigative Journalism Is Global*, Hugo de Burgh introduces the work of colleagues around the world whose operations illustrate current developments in investigative journalism. Each of these works contributed a chapter to the third edition of *Investigative Journalism*, which Hugo de Burgh edited with Paul Lashmar. The author first introduces the context in which investigative journalism operates currently around the world. Then, the author focuses on the places where investigative journalism is conducted.

In Chap. 9, entitled *Confessions of Two Well-Meaning 'Mzungu' Journalism Trainers*, Ivor Gaber and Naomi Goldsmith discuss the role of the Anglo-American model of journalism in media development in the Global South. First, reflecting on their own wide experiences as media trainers and consultants, each of the authors shares insights gained from leading journalism training in more than 40 countries, many of them in the sub-Saharan Africa. Then, the authors jointly suggest seven universal journalistic principles that should form the bedrock of any international journalistic interventions.

Chapter 10, *Understanding Different Journalisms* by Saba Bebawi, explores trends in journalistic training and newsroom practices of Arab journalists and investigative reporters. The author reflects on how journalists operate in negotiating a balance between the way they are trained on Western models and the way they practice journalism according to their own local models. The final chapter aims to reinforce and conclude the main message of the book. Bebawi emphasises the need to move beyond universalistic ways and claims of practicing journalism, towards nuanced models that embrace contextual peculiarities of different countries in the Global South.

REFERENCES

- Hanitzsch, T., Hanusch, F., Ramaprasad, J., & De Beer, A. S. (Eds.). (2019). *Worlds of journalism: Journalistic cultures around the globe*. Columbia University Press.

- Tunstall, J. (1977). *The media are American*. Columbia University Press.
- Tunstall, J. (2007). *The media were American: U.S. mass media in decline*. Oxford University Press.
- Volkmer, I. (1999). *News in the global sphere: A study of CNN and its impact on global communications*. University of Luton Press.
- Volkmer, I. (2007). Governing the “spatial reach”? Spheres of influence and challenges to global media policy. *International Journal of Communication*, 1(1), 18.