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Journalism in a Globalized Risk Arena:
Between Networks, Interdependencies and Power Relations

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Introduction

Decades ago, the consequences of climate change, humanitarian disasters, military conflict, terrorism, financial crises, or migration have been mainly addressed in relation to national implications by national news journalism. However, it seems that today, crises like these and many others, such as the COVID pandemic, the war in Ukraine or the Middle East conflict appear 'de-territorialized' as their transnational implications are increasingly in focus of national and local journalism across continents.

Over the past years, a growing number of studies in journalism research began to identify the multiple discursive dimensions of news coverage concerned with transnational crises. Journalism scholarship, for instance, investigates news content to learn about contemporary framing practices, identifies taxonomies of digital news production, studies shifting news values applied in determining transnational crises territories or investigates modes of data access and analysis of crisis sources in journalism practice. While such studies provide important insights into the various dimensions of transnational crisis coverage, this Special

Issue aims to shift the focus towards a transnational perspective in which todays' 'risk' realities serve as the lens to study journalistic production. Overall, this Special Issue addresses the question how journalism evolves in a globalized 'risk arena' and aspires to advance the discussion of the role of journalism when addressing globalized risks.

The term 'risk', originally developed by Ulrich Beck (2008, 2017), aims to address problems confronting all societies across countries and continents. The original version of the concept of 'risk society' relates to the outcomes of the (industrialized) second modernity where 'things go wrong' and lead to completely unforeseen, unimagined and uncontrollable magnitudes of all kinds of disasters. At the time when the term was developed these were nuclear disasters, massive environmental pollutions, climate change. These, so Beck argued, can no longer be solved in conventional routines of conventional political alliances but require a 'cosmopolitan imperative,' involving new types of interdependent worldviews.

However, today's multitude of equally unforeseen globalized crises can no longer be seen as an outcome of the second modernity but are rather the result of numerous globalization processes. We are facing the limitations of conventional political alliances aiming to solve current political crises. Concomitantly, massive geopolitical shifts are contributing to the erosion of a world order 'as we knew it.' The notion of 'globalized risk' and the need for public awareness of globalized interdependencies of crises do underline a much-needed cosmopolitan imperative which constitutes, so our argument, important parameters for emerging conceptual dimensions for journalism scholarship and research. Such an interdependent focus is all the more needed as 'globalized risks' create moments of massive uncertainties in a variety of ways across societies and in public debates.

For example, the pandemic has revealed how citizens across countries turn to diverse transnational digital and data sources (from social media to search sites to the WHO) in an attempt to 'compare' and 'contrast' crisis information of national news journalism (Volkmer, 2021). In their study, Volkmer (2021) showed that citizens themselves create their own transnationally interdependent 'risk horizons', while the journalism that originates in their home countries often focusses on the implications of risk for their own nation. Yet, in the wake of an interdependent 'risk arena', and within the multiple source environment, available to citizens in many countries, we argue that journalists take the role of an important public actor. But the question then becomes: how can journalism address these globalized risks, while power relations shift, global interdependencies increasingly take center stage and various kinds of communicative actors (ranging from journalists themselves, governments, citizens, to scientists and NGO's) share todays' information sphere.

Journalism, in fact, faces many obstacles when addressing globalized risks. For example, the dramatic changes the news industry is undergoing which reveals its own risk in the coverage of globalized risk-related events: While decades ago, journalists worked in full-time, secure employment and within traditional news organizations, journalism researchers have commenced to explore the increasing social and income precarity of news workers. Meanwhile, precarity has intensified in countries where instability, vulnerability, and low pay had long been normalized across work domains: journalists must work harder and do more to cover more areas and accept additional tasks with less preparation and support to keep their jobs (Chada & Steiner, 2021). This is the topic that the first article of this Special Issue tackles. Rob Sharp and Richard Stupart open this Special Issue and investigate how new forms of

journalism arise in the wake of increased globalized interdependencies and globalized risk. In their article *Friends like these: A shift in labour, security and the normative ideals of conflict journalism*, they highlight the growing relationship between professional journalism and humanitarianism. Zooming in on the realities of conflict journalism today, they attest that this subfield of journalism "appears to have increasingly 'moved house' from the normative universe of institutional journalism to that of professional humanitarianism." Sharp and Stupart discuss the shifts in production realities that conflict journalists face on the job and that pave the grounds for interdependencies between the worlds of journalism and the worlds of what has been dubbed as 'aidland' (Apthorpe, 2005; Mosse, 2011) and 'peaceland' (Autesserre, 2014). The growing interdependencies between these fields potentially foster shifts in the normative ideals that guide conflict journalists in the field, and subsequently impact their reporting of crisis and risk.

Adding to these observed changes in journalism practice, scholars attest that traditional sourcing practices have come under scrutiny in todays' journalistic production realities. In times of globalized risks, a significant ambiguity relating to the trust in sources exists, including regarding government briefings. This is particularly evident in countries led by authoritarian regimes. However, the internationally interdependent reality of globalized crisis does not correspond with the 'foreign' and 'domestic' dichotomy – and dialectic – of normal journalistic practice, and this goes for countries facing authoritarian regimes as well as for countries that are seen as democratic. Globalized crises unfold across a long-time span and continuous information of macro- and micro-implications in an international spectrum is required. The disruptive nature of a crisis raises questions about the way how journalists select sources and what these choices say about professional autonomy and criticality. This is the topic which

Paschalia Spyridou, Pantelis Vatikiotis and Theodora A. Maniou address in their comparison of perceptions of journalists from Greece and Cyprus. In their article *Newswork in crisis: Sourcing patterns during Covid-19 through a 'lived experience' perspective*, the authors examine sourcing practices during the Covid-19 crisis. Similar to Chada and Steiner's (2021) line of argumentation, they conclude that professional precarity and economic pressures are found to further worsen the 'lived experience' of journalists, limiting their ability to question and scrutinize power. Such discussions of power relations are, in our view, paramount in an attempt to advance the discussion of the role that journalism takes in times of globalized risks.

The following articles in this Special Issue open the debate around power and journalistic practice beyond the Western realm. Shifting the focus to the Global South, this Special includes scholarly perspectives concerned with the lack in media and journalism scholarship regarding Global North/Global South comparisons. Contemporary scholarship increasingly acknowledges that much of what we know about journalism builds on our knowledge about journalism in the Global North (Hanitzsch, 2019), while perspectives from the Global South are often still marginalized. This observation holds especially with reference to the study of globalized risks and their effects on newsroom work. At the same time, though, scholars focusing on the study of journalism from the Global South point at the massive challenges that journalism in general and in everyday practice faces in countries that are till date not so prominently featured in the field of journalism studies. For example, scholars from the Global South raise concerns regarding the technical infrastructure that journalists face – ranging from digital access issues to electricity outages. And while many journalists particularly in the Global South continue to struggle with editorial censorship and government surveillance, much of what we know about journalisms' publics in the Global North does not apply in their

context. Rather, journalists here need to consider diverse publics composed of young informed digital citizens as well as of groups who might lack media access or (digital) literacy skills. In addition, scholars emphasize restricted rights, violence, corruption, populism and authoritarianism (e.g. Soto-Sanfiel et al, 2022; Borges-Rey, 2019).

These scholarly observations lay bare that more research is needed to better understand journalism from the Global South, particularly in times where risk interdependencies change the very ways by which journalistic outlets operate. The contribution to this Special Issue authored by Maha Abdulmajeed Attia and Rasha El-Ibiary taps into this research angle. In their article on *Journalistic Role Conceptions and Performance in the Global South: A Comparison between Egypt and the UAE during Covid-19*, the authors use the hierarchy of influences model to analyse journalistic role conceptions, perceived performance, and challenges journalists faced in covering Covid-19, and how that affected their journalistic performance as Global South-based journalists. Their article reveals noteworthy gender differences: Women journalists in the countries under study overall felt more insecure due to male favouritism, a major trait of the Global South, as the authors argue. Journalists were also challenged by adapting to new technology, despite increased workload and amid their lack of experience in covering crises. This led many of them, especially in Egypt, to contract the virus. Finally, journalists in both countries, at varied degrees, were stressed, working in isolation, lacking support amid an endless pandemic, threatening their lives and families. All in all, the article of Abdulmajeed Attia and El-Ibiary highlights how globalized risks such as the pandemic have laid bare the at times precarious working conditions that journalists in countries of the Global South face, with female journalists in particular referring back to the precarity of marginalized news workers (Chada and Steiner, 2021).

Shifting the discussion to press-state relations, Cecilia Arregui Olivera and David Cheruiyot focus on the Sub-Saharan African context to shed light on the working conditions of journalists in Kenya. In *The Risks of Peace: Exploring the relationship between peaceocracy and journalism in Kenya*, the authors draw on empirical insights from two case studies to explore how peace-building discourses adopted by journalists challenge the independence of newsrooms. Their article cyrcles around the idea of 'peacocracy' (Lynch, 2020) as a leadership strategy applied in transnational countries where the leading elites of society such as politicians, civil society or the church – and *including* the press – appear in agreement over how best to achieve political stability. A peacocracy is not seen as anti-democratic, yet it is thought to undermine democratic principles to a certain extend while it "favours the status quo over political transitions as this brings much more promise of stability." In their interviews with journalists, The authors found that establishing such a peacocracy undermines journalistic authority. The state acts as a "guardian of peace" while the press is used as an organ to disseminate these ideas to a wider public. Arregui Olivera and Cheruiyot thus identify interdependencies that are characterized by a pressure on journalists to act as "promoters of peace" to an extend where the press partly loses control over their functions due to external pressures posed by political elites. Editorial independence is put at risk and while these risks might at first glance appear to be local in scope, the authors do stress that the case of Kenya should be seen as indicative of wider global trends. As such, their paper calls for more research of journalistic practice in countries that are politically in transition.

The final article of this Special Issue takes us back to pandemic times to assess the work of German news outlets and their responses to this global crisis. In their article *Global Learning*

from Europe or Asia? How German Journalism Handled Global Interdependence and Governance during the Covid-19 Pandemic, Anne Grüne, Kai Hafez and Till Holland develop the idea of an imbalance of 'communicative interdependence'. Their empirical analysis of established German news outlets asks how they addressed the responses to the COVID crisis in other world regions. Their study reflects on German press coverage of the WHO, European countries (Portugal and Italy) and Asian countries (South Korea and Taiwan) and argues that these countries and actors developed best practices during the pandemic that could have been addressed as best practice models in journalistic coverage. However, their research reveals that while "comparative policy news from other countries in the EU – did exist," they were often addressed too late in the process "to serve as a policy role model for better informed German policies." Furthermore, when assessing interdependent North-South relations using South Korea and Taiwan as case studies, authors note that "both countries were literally ignored as best practice models." Risk communication of leading German newspapers was thus more "reactive than prospective and pro-active in nature." In consequence Gruene, Hafez and Holland suggest to revise news values in contexts of globalized communicative interdependence to create "a truly interdependent European journalistic 'early warning system' in times of crisis."

Taken together, all articles in this Special Issue tap into discussions on how journalism in different world regions is dealing with social or political instabilities and crises in times of globalized risks. Their articles provoke questions regarding journalistic independence, they shed light on the complex power structures to which journalists are subjected to and they inquire how journalistic content can potentially develop global frameworks in assessing

globalized risks. The underlying script that unifies these contributions is the question how journalistic practice in North and South reacts to a globalized risk arena.

Journalism in a Globalized Risk Arena: Providing a Space for Scholarly Dialogue

In a world in which societies across the globe increasingly face globalized risks, journalistic production is challenged to adjust their practices. This Special Issue marks an attempt to open the floor for discussions on these subject matters. From acknowledging how new communicative networks shape information flows and power relations to the development of globalized interdependencies across countries affecting how people live, work and connect: journalists from both Global North and South are challenged to adjust in turbulent times. Scholarship, in turn, is adjusting as well, seeking to uncover the many facets of change that journalism is subjected to.

We started this conversation at the height of the COVID pandemic in the summer of 2020. Back then, a group of more than 80 scholars, educators, practitioners, and policymakers representing more than 50 countries from the Global North and South gathered online to create the Global Risk Journalism Hub (GRJH).[1] The editors of this Special Issue are founding members and regional leaders of the Global Risk Journalism Hub. With the aim to increase knowledge of how users and institutions across continents engage with digital spheres in times of crisis, the Global Risk Journalism Hub set out to build transnational research projects. Since its inception in 2020, the GRJH brought together scholars across world regions to jointly address how journalists in their respective world regions deal with the challenges they face in

[1] More information about the Global Risk Journalism Hub is available at https://www.globalriskjournalismhub.com/ .

their day-to-day practice. The Hub also initiated the idea to facilitate these discussions among a wider scholarly public and to organize an event that provided an arena for this.

This Special Issue draws upon research that was first presented at a preconference that the Editors organized in the context of the annual convention of the International Communication Association (ICA) in Paris 2022. The preconference on *Comparative communication research in a globalized risk arena: paradigms, methods, critique* was set up in collaboration with UNESCO's Free Flow of Information Division who kindly hosted this event in their headquarters in Paris.

During the day of the conference – and inspired by the vibrant atmosphere that roams through the hallways at UNESCO where people from all corners of the world gather – our group of conference participants over and again addressed the need to create opportunities for scholars from across the world to reflect on the implications of globalized risks for their regions. The articles combined in this special issue emerged out of our discussions that day. To gain fresh insights on conceptual as well as research-practice levels, we kept this issue open to a variety of approaches. Our aim is to drive research agenda's by opening the floor for new discussions on how to study journalism in globalized risk arenas. As such, this Special Issue serves as just one tiny step that – so the editors hope – initiates a larger conversation.

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