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Essay: Varieties of cross-border journalism

Abstract:

Europe has a rich heritage of diverse languages, political cultures, enlightenment traditions and, consequently, frameworks of journalism idea(l)s, based on different understandings of its tasks, audiences and position in society. As yet, however, the addition of a cross-border dimension to journalism has not resulted in the development of cross-border collaborations along correspondingly diverse lines. The recent rise of journalistic cross-border collaboration seems much indebted to the muckraking tradition of reporting, rooted in the decades when populism was coined as a positive, anti-elitist term in the United States. Targeting corrupt practices, muckrakers have traditionally been committed to exposing liars, frauds, crooks – wrong ones – in politics and business. This is useful to society at large but insufficient if compared to aims of stimulating, across borders, critical public reflection and exchange about international public affairs. Because it may generate self-righteousness in its practitioners and audiences, it might even hamper such practices, dependent as they are on a capacity for self-critical appraisal among participants. What would cross-border collaboration look like if connected to, for instance, the logic of publicist journalism with its affinity for intellectually challenging political debate and its capacity for scrutinizing stereotypes? Why has it not evolved? What might be done to further a diversity of approaches to journalistic cross-border collaboration? And, might shared attention to the concept of cosmopolitanism be helpful to that purpose?

Keywords:

journalism logics, populism, pluralism, civil society, cosmopolitanism

Ask people in the know to improvise five key words or catch phrases useful to the purpose of defining cross-border journalism and, more likely than not, you will go home with notes about accountability journalism holding the powerful to account and about a battle where data are harvested and used to uncover and disseminate the truth. In exchanges about how cross-border journalism might be strengthened and further developed as a variety of investigative journalism, understandings along those lines are commonplace. Constituting the platform of departure for enquiries and discussions about cross-border collaborations, they appear to be beyond critical reflection in their own right – as understandings that have specific historical and cultural origins and practical effects and might be contradicted or supplemented by other understandings, with other origins and other effects. Addressing those who might feel somewhat restrained by that state of affairs, this essay aims at facilitating reflections on how the scope of cross-border journalism – and, for that matter, investigative journalism – might be widened. Precious little is predefined by the terminologies of cross-border and investigative journalism. Each comes with a wide interpretational space, waiting for a rich variety of practitioners who base their investigative, border crossing activities on varying idea(l)s of journalism, complementing each other with different kinds of appeals to the citizens of the world and, thus, combining participation in internationalisation processes

with care for cosmopolitan diversity and pluralism. That is the case I will make, focusing on journalism as a profession rather than as a component of the media industry. The initial presentation of the argument, originating in the not very crowded field of the philosophy of journalism, concerns the notion of journalistic logics, their background, basic assumptions and concepts. This is followed – prior to the concluding discussion of cosmopolitanism, diversity and journalism education – by illustrations of practical implications that the introduction of diverse journalistic approaches to cross-border activities might have.

Journalistic professional idea(l)s

A profession can be defined by the societal tasks its practitioners are responsible for carrying out and which would not be carried out in the absence of the profession (Gadamer 2000: 127). There are multiple possible understandings of the key tasks of journalism. Asking, in 2003, Danish journalists from various journalistic specialities what journalism was about, I received radically dissimilar answers. According to one interviewee, journalism was ‘an independent body of control, ensuring that society is in working order and nobody goes too far’. Another interviewee had it that it was the task of journalism to ‘bring down some crooks’. And yet another pointed to ‘critique of established norms and bad habits’ as a key task of journalism (Meyer 2005: 375).¹ Understandings of the notion of investigative journalism have been shown to also vary greatly (Eijk 2005). Potentially, thus, even the notion of cross-border journalism may be interpreted in many ways and characterised by a multiplicity of approaches.

Here, we will take a brief look at two – among many possible – distinct logics of journalism, too brief to do justice to any of them but, hopefully, sufficient to the discussion of varieties of cross-border journalism.² Journalistic logics, I suggest, are constituted by frameworks of (and for) thought on the mores and means of the profession. Founded on basic and mostly tacit assumptions about the order of societal reality, those frameworks, in turn, can be seen as cultural outgrowths, closely connected to different languages or language areas. The logics that are used as examples here are connected to, respectively, English speaking (the reporter logic) and German and Scandinavian speaking cultures (the publizist logic). They rely on different taken-for-granted answers to such questions as: Why journalism? What is journalism about? Who should journalism address? From what position? And, how, then, should journalists go about their business?

Responses to those questions are outcomes of much wider, equally implicit understandings: Understandings of politics and democracy; assumptions about and aspirations on behalf of the publics of modern societies; idea(l)s about knowledge and what it takes for knowledge claims to be reliable. Even in Europe, which is in focus here, such understandings – outcomes of different enlightenment traditions and other historical circumstances and experiences – differ from one cultural context to another. Not least, politico-cultural differences between language areas can be observed (Meyer and Lund 2008). Studies of journalistic notions and concepts in Romance or Slavonic languages, therefore, might reveal other assumptions, understandings and idea(l)s, nurturing other journalistic logics.

During the current phase of internationalization – accompanied by increasing dominance of the English language – such varieties of journalism may or may not survive and be able to provide the citizenries of an increasingly interconnected world with their particular services and appeals. I will be arguing that there should be room for different approaches – not that one logic, or some logics, should be outed and replaced by only one universal logic. Accordingly, although personally rooted in the publizist logic and having some reservations vis-à-vis the reporter logic, I consider both logics valid and legitimate. In spite of conflictual issues, they are much too different to be opposites, but well suited to complement and, now and again, counteract each other.

The reporter logic

¹ I have translated the quotations from Danish.

² For a more detailed discussion of the logics, see Meyer and Lund (2014).

So far, the Anglo-American reporter tradition of journalism – roughly corresponding to what has been called the Atlantic media model (Hallin and Mancini 2004) – appears to have come out on top of the development of cross-border practices. Journalistic cross-border collaborations seem almost exclusively to take place in line with basic assumptions that have shaped this framework of thought. Although increasingly dominant and ascribed universal validity by many – a development which has been supported, probably, by the general spread of Anglo-American culture following World War II – it is a journalistic logic which has a history of its own, going far back in time. Its commitment to the (religious³ and scientific) notion of ‘the truth’; its wariness of politics; its understanding of the public within the framework of a dualism of ‘the people’ versus the powerful or the masses⁴ versus the (intellectual, political and financial) elites; its approach to political democracy as a system which should enable the people to control the powerful; and the way its concept of news mirrors fundamental features of the concept of scientific facts – although adopted by journalists and journalistic educational institutions around the globe, all these features are cultural, rather than universal features.

Evolving in the wake of the American Civil War, the reporter tradition spent its infancy and youth under the influence of – and probably influencing – the Progressive movement (Cater 1959: 85) with its deeply rooted beliefs in science⁵ as a possible, peaceful substitute for conflict-ridden politics. The generic reporter was modelled on the ideal of the objective, impersonal and disinterested scientist and on the basis of stark dualisms – prone to generate polarisation – which have also informed the academic science tradition.⁶ As an outside observer, he – at that time, female reporters were rare – should only report the facts. He should steer clear of advocacy, interpretations, opinions, partisanship and subjectivity, all seen as possible precursors of conflict and taken to be dangerously close to special and self-serving interests. He should commit himself to truth-seeking. He should serve the people as a producer of (pure) news as opposed to (contaminated) views.

It is a peculiarity of dualistic frameworks that they not only allow, but also appear to inspire normative inversions (Assmann 2010: 81) which reverse the attributions of value but keep the assumptions of fundamental oppositions in place. For example, such assumed dualisms as observation versus participation or objectivity versus subjectivity will be upheld but the attribution of value is shifted from one extreme to the other.⁷ That mechanism leaves room for many interpretations, and the reporter logic, accordingly, has room for many schools or branches. Each school comes with its own valuations of shared notions and assumed dualisms and may not experience any kinship with other schools. However, the reporter schools – when viewed from a certain and distanced point of observation – appear as kindred expressions of a shared understanding, only discernible to outsiders, of societal reality. Thus, it does make sense that one early offspring of this logic was the muckraking reporter variety which, at first glance, appears as the exact opposite of the naked reporter. A closer look reveals that the muckraker and the naked reporter share their assumptions about reality. Only, they come with different, often directly opposing, normative valuations of features of that shared scheme of assumed dualisms.

Rooted in the first decades of the twentieth century when populism (Barnhart 2006) was coined as a positive, anti-elitist term in the United States, muckrakers targeted corrupt practices.⁸ They aimed at exposing liars, frauds, crooks – wrong ones – in politics and business. They were not outside observers, but made their workshop in the exact opposite pole of one of the logic’s assumed dualisms: observation versus

³ The religious roots of American journalism have been splendidly looked into by Nord (2001), and Underwood (2008).

⁴ For a discussion of the notion of the masses, its connotations of lacking intellectual capacities and its connections to the notion of the people, see Meyer (2018: 64–92).

⁵ Science, as a term, should not be confused with the German *Wissenschaft*. The latter term, and its relatives in the Scandinavian languages, include the humanities. The difference is a classic example of significant but frequently ignored differences among European languages.

⁶ The academic science tradition also evolved in the wake of civil wars – the English civil wars 1640–60 – that generated a dread of politics.

⁷ For a more thorough discussion of normative inversions, see for instance Meyer (2018): 15, 67.

⁸ For a wider and contextualised discussion of the history of muckraking, see Fink (1997).

participation. They were advocates; they were crusaders; they were partisans; they were activists. They were also convinced of their own identity as truth-telling reporters. Standing some of the naked reporter prescriptions on their head and replacing the dread of conflict by a confrontational approach, they *did* carry out a normative inversion – preferring conflict to consensus – but remained true to the founding dualistic framework. The assumed dualism, thus, of conflict versus consensus was left intact. By emphasizing with particular force the assumed dichotomy of ‘the people’ versus the powerful and ascribing the incriminating presence of special and self-serving interests only to the powerful (Ludwig 2011), advocacy and partisanship on behalf of the people acquired the seeming quality of a democratic battle to further and defend the truth against political, intellectual and financial elites.

Much like the American Populist Party was engulfed, on the brink of the twentieth century, by the Democratic Party, features from the muckraking approach were apparently modified and adopted by reporters at large, morphing into the currently conventional view of journalists as watchdogs, tasked with guarding and empowering the people – perceived to be powerless – against those in power positions, and controlling and demanding accountability from the latter.

The present rise of cross-border journalism, with its focus on revelations of crimes committed by financial and political elites, seems to be particularly indebted, like widespread idea(l)s of investigative journalism, to the muckraking variety of the reporter tradition. In exchanges about cross-border journalism, present tendencies to depart from a straightforward commitment to objectivity are emphasised. It is argued that ‘traditional objectivity and impartiality are less highly valued’ in ‘today’s more activist media environment’ (Sambrook 2018: 35), and that a ‘blurring of roles between activists, citizen journalists, watchdogs, and journalists’ is taking place (Koch 2018: 65) to the extent that it may be difficult to decide whether an organisation should be seen as ‘a campaigning organisation’ or as ‘a news organisation’ (Clements 2018: 83). References are made to ‘a growing debate about whether truth and transparency rather than neutrality should be in the forefront’ (Koch 2018: 69) – and it is argued that ‘newsrooms are faced daily with the rise of opinion overshadowing evidence’ (Clements 2018: 94). At the same time, investigative journalism is, as a matter of course, connected to muckraking (Kayser-Bril 2018: 60). In this as in other journalistic contexts, thus, the old reporter controversy about activism, partisanship and subjectivity versus neutrality and objectivity is obviously having a revival.

In significant ways, intellectual tendencies surrounding today’s development of journalistic cross-border collaboration appear to be similar to the intellectual tendencies, which surrounded the development of the reporter logic and its muckraking variety. Even the then scientism with its unreserved belief in empirical science – assumed to be free from human judgements – as an all-purpose problem solver (Altschull 1990; Crick 1964) seems strangely repeated in today’s fascination with science, technology and data.⁹ Also the wariness of politics has remained forceful. Warnings are issued, that ‘the risk of journalism being captured by politics remains real’ (Sambrook 2018: 95), whereas commitment to the notion of the truth is still evoked as a mark of honour of practitioners of cross-border journalism, characterized as ‘collaborative, 21st-century fact-finders, fact-checkers, and more broadly, truth-travellers and truth tellers’ (Lewis 2018: 23).

Along such lines, typical large-scale and widely published cross-border collaborative projects have targeted mafia connections in politics and cross-border tax evasion schemes. Corrupt practices have been exposed; liars, frauds and crooks in politics and business have been taken to account. When sufficiently thorough and robust, such enterprises, of course, are useful to the international society at large and have proved terribly dangerous, even deadly, to some of their most outstanding practitioners. There are, indeed, resourceful crooks around. Corruption in business and politics is not confined within national borders and must often be confronted by means of cross-border watchfulness. However, cross-border reporting along muckraking lines needs supplements from other journalistic logics. Going it alone, neither muckraking reporters nor, indeed, the reporter logic as such are likely to be up to the gigantic task of dealing in public

⁹ For useful discussions of the present fascination with data and the use of the data terminology as a kind of substitute for the terminology of facts, see Strauss (2015), and Prabhu (2015).

with current internationalization processes in ways that may sustain the civic activity and diversity of democratic societies.

The publizist logic

The publizist logic – as it is presented here – has been widely ignored by journalism and media scholars and researchers and it is to some extent a controversial claim that it exists or has existed at all. I make that claim: a distinct logic in its own right, with concepts and models of thought that constitute a coherent journalism idea(l) – I call it the publizist logic – is or has been around in Europe, not as a conscious tradition but as widespread understandings of the natural order of journalism. Since the end of World War II and, even more so, from the 1970s onwards, those understandings have been on retreat even in those areas where it seems to have been thriving in particular, the German and Scandinavian speaking countries. English-spoken discourses have been gaining ground, not least in the fields of journalism and communication studies (Lacasa-Mas et al. 2015). Publizist intuitions, however – expressed in the making of arguments that take publizist assumptions for granted – remain discernible between the lines in, for instance, Nordic scholarly discussions about subjectivity in journalism (Fonn et al. 2017).

It may be useful to first note aspects of the reporter logic that are absent from the publizist logic: Basically, the notions of truth-seeking, the people, the masses versus the elites, and control with power-holders are absent from the logic as is, importantly, the dualistic framework. Instead, there is a commitment to truthfulness, pluralism and exchanges among different points of view within an assumed public of citizens characterized by shared responsibilities, equal political rights, a capacity for reason and, thus, susceptibility to intellectual appeals. It is a secular logic, kindred with the humanities and literary traditions rather than with science and more at home in multi-party than in two-party democratic systems. To be investigative in this context is not confined to the exposure of wrong-doings but means to be sufficiently thorough – and, thus, critical – and to enquire beneath the surface of phenomena.

Public opinion does not really enter the picture, but there is a strong commitment to the reasoned formation of opinion in public and the institution of public discussion (*Öffentlichkeit*¹⁰) is pivotal to the logic. It is political in the sense of Max Weber, who described journalism as the epitome of a political profession, connected to an ethic of responsibility for action as distinct from an ethic of ultimate ends (Weber 1992: 36–37). Even more so, perhaps, the emphasis on truthful exchanges among different points of view as the proper journalistic mode – rather than religious or scientific truth-seeking – makes it political in the classical Aristotelian sense (Meyer 2018: 13–16; 115–119).

There is no fear or suspicion of interpretations. Publizist journalism is by definition participative (as distinct from partisan or activist) and interpretative (as distinct from advocative or manipulative). Impersonal outside observation is not considered an option with respect to human affairs. Journalists, like other humans, are assumed to be bound to participate in human affairs and, thus, to make interpretations. Therefore, they had better do it properly, critically and thoroughly, truthfully and moderately, so as to make room for other interpretations and points of view. Characteristically, key publizist notions originate in the Latin verb for action or practice (*agere*), sharing its meaning with *praxis*, the key term in classical political philosophy. *Aktualität*, which tentatively may be translated into topicality and only makes sense in interpretational journalism, is but one example: It is particularly interesting because of its incompatibility with the reporter logic's news versus views dualism.¹¹

In short, the main aim of publizist journalism – vital to civil societies – is to stimulate and make room for critical thought and civilised exchanges about public affairs in a wide sense of the term. It would seem important to maintain that sort of aim and take it to the international level.

¹⁰ The German concept of *Öffentlichkeit* and its Scandinavian relatives are distorted by the mainstream translation into 'the public sphere'. For an expansion, see Meyer and Lund (2008).

¹¹ The notion of *Redaktion* (editing) also originates in *agere*. And, the concept of *Öffentlichkeit* only makes sense when understood as an activity.

Growing out of the nation states

Both logics grew up and matured with and within the modern nation states, sharing specific, implicit assumptions, understandings and norms that evolved in those states and were, more often than not, tied to different language areas. As journalism is growing out of the nation states – presenting, probably, representatives of different logics with different challenges – tacit assumptions and understandings must be made explicit and, thereby, accessible as topics for thought and exchange. The differences are likely to become somewhat blurred in step with the increasing dominance of the reporter tradition, supported by the use of English textbooks and concepts in journalism education. Even in spite of that development, though, basic assumptions originating in different mother tongues may remain significant to understandings of English spoken reporter terms.¹² To prevent misunderstandings during cross-border collaborations – and to make room for different approaches – journalists, shaped by different cultural traditions, need knowledge of how such differences are expressed in understandings of seemingly shared concepts and norms.

The data based exposures of corruption among those in power positions – mostly communicated so that the citizens and political system of each country are enabled to deal with their particular, corrupt elites – clearly originate in the reporter logic. From a publicist point of view, it might seem more obvious to pursue a purpose of widening national horizons by way of exposure to understandings and approaches to international challenges in other countries. Ideally, such journalistic endeavours might, at the end of a rather long day – slowly, gradually and far from effortlessly – further the development of internationally and critically minded publics, debating shared challenges within and across borders and allowing exchanges from various national contexts to stimulate each other. Systematic endeavours of this kind remain to be tried out.

Some pitfalls and potentials

Together, different kinds of journalistic appeals, originating in different logics, might serve to ensure that current internationalization processes do not merely result in a global market and consumer culture, marred by recurrent outbreaks of populism, extreme nationalism and partisan politics, but are accompanied by processes of internationalization at the civil society level. Left undisturbed by other approaches, however, the reporter logic may generate some negative side effects.

The unintended cultivation of populism

Because it may result in the decrease of cultural diversity, the homogenization and standardization of journalism, expressed by the dominance of a single journalistic logic, can be seen as a problem in its own right. Thus, the case can be made that a variety of approaches to cross-border journalism is needed simply for the sake of cultural diversity. There is, however, more to it. The fact that different journalistic logics come with different potentials is not limited to potentials in the positive sense. It includes pitfalls, which might to some extent be countered by other journalistic approaches.

Possible problematic side effects of the present data craze – in journalism and in general – may serve as illustration. Historically, such crazes, coming in waves, appear to have been gaining momentum against a background of suspicion of human interpretations and corresponding beliefs that hard facts, hard data or hard news represent the road to ‘the truth beyond dispute’ (Muhlmann 2008: 17). Within such schemes, journalism easily comes to be seen as a sort of empirical, non-interpretative and fact-producing science of reporting. As a consequence, the ability of reporters to acknowledge and deal in a transparent way with their own interpretations may suffer. That, in turn, may pave the way for moralism. At the same time, journalists’ capacity for dealing critically with outcomes of measurements in general may be eroded. And, journalists may become vulnerable to, and unable to defend themselves against demands for statistical evidence of the effects of their professional efforts. Interventions would seem in place by representatives

¹² In-depth studies of different interpretations of seemingly shared journalistic notions and concepts – and how they are presented in textbooks – have, to my knowledge, not been carried out so far.

of journalistic logics marked by a considerably lower degree of fascination with numbers and with a more critical understanding of the data concept.

Another illustration concerns different understandings of the public. Invariably, such understandings come with self-fulfilling potentials. Appeals are made to the sort of public journalists assume to be addressing. Such appeals, in turn, are likely to call forth the qualities they address. But, the cultivation among citizens of an identity as powerless, excluded and oppressed – subjects rather than citizens – might not be helpful to a purpose of facilitating the development of internationally minded publics with a capacity for critical discussion, including the kind of self-critical appraisal which is crucial to critical, intellectual activity (Gadamer 1993:157). Actually, the completely unintentional generation of populism – and of self-righteousness in journalistic practitioners and their audiences – appear as more probable outcomes. That, in turn, might to some extent be counteracted by representatives of other journalistic logics, appealing to other assumed qualities among citizens.

The current virality of popular beliefs

At any rate, many of the challenges shared by today's societies are too complex to be contained within the reporter scheme. They cannot be reduced to villain-victim relationships, do not originate in abuses of power and cannot be solved by processes of identifying and exposing the culprits. Often, real culprits cannot be identified. Rather, the problems are tied in intricate ways to widespread assumptions, understandings and norms – to popular beliefs, to public opinion. And, the public opinion, in the sense of *Zeitgeist*, can be seen as an increasingly international phenomenon.

For a long time, national, cultural and linguistic borders slowed down the dissemination among countries and language areas of understandings and norms, including fixed ideas, prejudices and stereotypes as well as tolerant and open-minded ideas and attitudes. During the most recent decade, however, the rapid development of digital technologies and English-spoken platforms has severely weakened those borders. Walls have been torn down (Lewis 2018:5). In many ways, of course, such tearing down of walls, such removal of barriers, is a good thing, but it includes pitfalls that demand attention. Penetrable borders, as distinct from iron curtains, come with some benefits (Liesmann 2012). They slow things down and, thus, may serve to further the critical appraisal of ideas, understandings and norms prior to their possible adoption and, perhaps, modification in a new context. When the barriers break down, on the other hand, all sorts of beliefs may go viral around the globe. It can be seen, then, as a journalistic task, to provide alternative braking mechanisms. To hold back mental tsunamis, to slow things down, to delay communicative closure. To secure time for thought.

More or less justified health scares and obsessions, for instance, currently travel around the world in no time. In the less justified cases, they may serve, among other things, to divert attention and resources from serious health and health sector problems. Ideas and attitudes matter. They inform the demand for health services. On the supply side there are, of course, also vested interests at play. There are professionals and producers who wish to sell their medical services, pharmaceutical products and devices and may attempt to sway popular beliefs to suit their own best interests because their success depends on whether the public opinion is favourable to demands for their services.

In short, popular convictions are pivotal to healthcare sector challenges and a good many of such current challenges – expressed by resource scarcity, waiting lists for the treatment of serious diseases and lack of ability to prioritise – are international by nature. They do not originate in the peculiarities of national systems, but in international tendencies, including technological developments and waves of public opinion changes. Journalistic braking mechanisms might serve to make room for ideas and attitudes to be subjected to processes of reasoned formation of opinion in public rather than to be simply adopted straightaway. Much the same applies to related areas. Food scares and obsessions also travel around the world without much resistance. As journalistically documented (Ebert 2018), a sudden craving for avocado in privileged countries may result, among other things, in poor peasants on the other side of the globe being forced to leave their homes to make room for huge and very thirsty avocado plantations. The corporations behind those enterprises may well be exposed as cynics. Corrupt practices may surf on top of such waves. If so, it is

of course useful to have them identified and exposed, but it is not sufficient. It would seem worthwhile to also introduce discussions about the beliefs that created the demands in the first place: how reasonable is the sudden desire for avocados – or the innumerable fears of other kinds of food, or the obsessions with physical and mental test devices, or ...? How did they come about? What kind of sense do they make? There is no correct answer to the question of how journalists should deal with such waves of popular beliefs. There are multiple possible answers, depending on multiple different assumptions about the public and the position of the journalist vis-à-vis the public. From a publicist point of view, it is a key task of journalism to challenge widespread beliefs, to scrutinize stereotypes and, now and again, to disturb fellow citizens. The commitment to a task of mirroring the public opinion has, however, become – or remained – fairly mainstream (Wind-Friis 2018). In effect, journalists, serving as amplifiers, are more likely to disseminate and enforce waves of popular beliefs than to facilitate critical discussions about them. The latter, in fact, from a generic reporter point of view, might be viewed as a regrettable departure from neutrality and from the ideal of simply reporting the facts.

Publicist potentialities

Different national approaches to shared international challenges might be used as eye-openers, prompting audiences into reconsidering assumptions and attitudes they have taken for granted so far. Here, we will go very briefly into three possible examples of cross-border journalism along those lines, marked by a publicist approach, but with rich possibilities for conventional reporting.

An explosion of tests has characterised the health sector developments during the recent decades. It is an international phenomenon, driven by technological achievements and by the credo that prevention is better than cure and early detection a kind of preventive measure. It seems safe to assume that different healthcare systems deal with the explosion in different ways, but how, in fact, do they deal with them? There is a whole array of possible questions for journalists to ask, such as: How do the various nation states approach embryo diagnosis? Or cancer tests and screenings? Or genetic testing? Why do they deal with them in those particular ways? How is health testing regulated? How did it come about? What are the costs and the presumed benefits? How do commercial providers and international organisations enter the picture? Is there a particular demand for – or reluctance toward – specific kinds of testing? How, if at all, is health testing and efforts to prevent diseases in general debated in public? Is participation in screenings widely considered a moral obligation? What happens to the test data afterwards – are they stored, and if so, by whom, and do citizens have a right to refuse such storing?

Another example concerns attitudes to surveillance and measures to protect the privacy of citizens in the light of the increasing generation of big data and the corresponding possibilities for utilizing the data to offer assistance to – or to discipline – individuals and groups.¹³ How is the development debated in different countries? How are international guidelines or rules implemented in various countries? What is generally perceived as threats or promises, respectively, or as abuses or legitimate uses of data? Is the protection of privacy and of security, respectively, presented as mutually excluding considerations? How does the present development of digital surveillance systems in China inform the discussions in other countries? How do representatives of different national traditions cooperate about these issues in international contexts? Not least, traditions from the United Kingdom and Germany, respectively, spring to mind.

The third example is not at all readily accessible. It is, however, of major importance to political debates, comparisons and decisions, nationally and internationally. It concerns international developments surrounding national accounts and has hitherto been debated almost exclusively among economists and statisticians in relatively closed international fora. Confidence in national accounts, two of those experts have recently argued, is 'undermined by expanding the conceptual framework to serve the needs of productivity analysis'. Critique is directed at the treatment of scientific research and technological innovation as if they constituted production on a par with conventional, physical production. As a

¹³ For a critical discussion of big data and privacy, see Morozov (2013).

consequence, the argument goes, ‘economic models building on assumptions about behavior or production techniques’ have become increasingly important, and an ‘increasing number of assumptions and imputations [...] threaten the status of national accounts as a reliable source of official economic statistics’ (Lynch and Thage 2017). On top of that, international organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) are currently promoting the introduction into national accounts of even more fluffy happiness or well-being measurements from the speculative field of so-called happiness economics (Meyer 2016). Thus, what is widely considered the epitome of hard facts is growing softer. There are many questions to ask, questions that might even facilitate wider discussions about the limitations of measurements in more general terms. How do national statistical authorities deal with the development? Does it make sense to expand production terms to areas such as academic research and human happiness? What – besides daily pressure to be productive and appear to be successful and thriving – are citizens supposed to gain from participating in a happiness competition among nation states? What or who are driving the development in the OECD and the United Nations?

Cosmopolitanism: a conceptual platform for discussion across logics?

It seems to have become a standard practice that reporter understandings, norms and concepts are transferred to cross-border activities without awareness of other possible approaches to journalism. It is a pity. ‘As politics, business, trade, and, indeed, crime all develop into transnational activities’, it has been argued, ‘it is essential that journalism and those concerned with public accountability similarly respond’ (Sambrook 2018: 95). It may be argued with equal weight that as politics, business, trade, and crime all develop into transnational activities, it is essential that journalism and others concerned with the maintenance of critically minded citizenries similarly respond. There is no contradiction between those two statements. Instead, they express complementary positions which can be seen as mutually dependent in the sense that each provides something that the other neglects and both, if taken together, may serve to secure the benefits of contradiction in public exchanges.

Current cross-border journalism began to evolve on top of a development marked by the spread of Anglo-American culture, including Anglo-American understandings of the mores and means of journalism. Those understandings, in turn, and the assumptions they rely on, can be traced centuries back in time and are related to specific historical events and experiences, including the rise of modern, empirical science. Nevertheless, the reporter logic is now widely perceived as no less than the universal embodiment of journalism, including, of course, journalistic cross-border collaboration. There is hardly any logical necessity behind that development, but it would now take a conscious effort to somehow disentangle the idea(s) of cross-border journalism sufficiently from the conceptual knot of reporter understandings and norms to allow room for other understandings of journalism.

The concept of cosmopolitanism offers a possible approach to such disentanglement: cross-border journalism, however it is carried out, can be seen as cosmopolitan in the most basic of senses. It crosses national borders. It is not merely concerned with the conditions in, and does not merely address and care about the citizenry of one particular country. There are, however, multiple possible and equally valid interpretations of cosmopolitanism around. Currently, it is much in vogue. It is also a contested concept and useful as such because it may serve to further exchanges on the explicit premise that there is, indeed, room for different understandings and for practices that go with them.

Citizens of the world

The literal and ambiguous meaning of the term cosmopolitan is ‘citizen of the world’ (Barnhart 2006). There seems to be general agreement across language areas that ‘cosmos’, when forming part of the terminology of cosmopolitanism, refers to ‘the world’ rather than to the universe at large. It is, in other words, widely seen as a secular rather than a religious concept and is mostly taken to concern human relationships.

Interpretations of the components of cosmopolitanism – the world and the citizen, respectively – are crucial to understandings of and consequent approaches to cosmopolitan activities. Oddly, the political

component seems to be somewhat ignored. *Cosmopolitan* draws on the classical notion of the city-state or *polis* which gave rise, in the first place, to such notions as politics and politeness. Interpretations of the citizen component tend, however, to be watered-down and rarely appear to be referring to citizens as active and co-responsible participants in the political life of societies. More often, in fact, the citizen component might simply be substituted by references to humankind.

Some interpretations operate with an elaborate taxonomy of cosmopolitanism varieties such as moral, political, cultural and economic cosmopolitanism (Kleingeld and Brown 2014). The latter variety, denoting an all-out commitment to a worldwide market of goods and services, is hardly distinguishable from commitment to globalization in the sense of global capitalism. Moral cosmopolitanism, on the other hand, appears as a sibling of philanthropy or humanitarianism and signifies the endorsement of the right of all humans to be respected and supported when in need, irrespective of their country of origin.¹⁴ Journalists might contribute to current processes of interpretation by various elaborations of cosmopolitanism as an explicitly political concept, emphasizing the citizen aspects and, at the same time, facilitating exchanges among different journalistic positions.

Democracies, it has recently been argued, currently experience a cleavage – going right through traditional parties and left versus right distinctions – between those who are committed to cosmopolitanism and others whose commitments are of a communitarian nature (Merkel 2017). The argument, connecting cosmopolitan attitudes to elites and communitarian leanings to the masses, seems based on the premise that cosmopolitanism and communitarianism represent a dualism of (completely) open versus (completely) closed borders, or of internationalism versus nationalism. In line with that interpretation, cosmopolitanism has been used as a term of abuse by nationalist and anti-elitist movements of a fascist vein (Buruma 2017). For several reasons, such dichotomic interpretations do, indeed, appear simplistic. There is, for instance, hardly any necessary connection between support of global capitalism and positive attitudes to refugees. Nevertheless, the argument about a cosmopolitanism–communitarianism cleavage may still be utilized by journalists as food for thought. It might, for instance, be worthwhile to ponder whether seemingly cosmopolitan projects, carried out in a spirit of border bashing, might to some extent be tacitly informed by communitarian values and, thus, by a commitment to tightly knit communities that depend on borders to survive.

Regrettably, the journalistic profession has no strong tradition of critical intercourse with concepts and, therefore, might too easily adopt the conceptual fashions of the day without considering their premises and possible consequences for journalists, their audiences and societies at large. The present internationalization and development of journalistic cross-border collaborations offer an opportunity to get rid of that sort of innocence by debating – not least across journalistic logics – the premises and possible consequences for journalists and their audiences of different understandings of and approaches to cosmopolitanism. That, in turn, might lead on to discussions about whether cross-border projects, actual or planned, are likely to actually transmit the kind of messages the practitioners intend to transmit.

The maintenance of diversity

The case can be made that globalization – seen by some, as will be remembered, as economic cosmopolitanism – generates a need to expand the institution of public discussion across borders and, thus, to facilitate reasonable political exchanges, edited and moderated, about shared societal challenges. I have argued that one possible merit of such exchanges might be that they would enable the citizenries of different nation states to review their conventional understandings in the light of the conventional understandings of other countries. Only, such merits are preconditioned by the maintenance of cultural differences. Cosmopolitanism practices along the lines of international standardization might, in fact, erode some possible benefits of other cosmopolitan practices.

¹⁴ Cosmopolitanism in the humanitarian sense has been suggested as a framework for so-called constructive journalism. See Schmidt (2017).

When thinking such challenges over, journalists might benefit from input from proponents of cosmopolitanism who have taken them into account and suggested interpretations of the concept that explicitly combine cosmopolitanism and care for diversity (Appiah 2007; Beck 2004). Key components of cosmopolitanism along those lines include interest in the activities and conditions in other countries than one's own; the general recognition of responsibility across borders; and the maintenance of diversity. Transferred to journalism, of course, care for diversity would include the maintenance of and exchange among different journalistic logics and the expansion of cross-border journalism to include journalistic approaches explicitly aimed at cultivating or restoring critically minded audiences. The kind of journalistic cross-border collaboration suited to the latter task depends on the slow and gradual build-up of professional contacts across borders, facilitating continuous cooperative efforts to critically review and expose contemporary trends while drawing on differences and similarities among countries and cultures. Sadly, this would hardly be commercially viable. Neither would it be easily aligned with the current demands for measurements of all that moves (or does not move), journalism included. Therefore, funding would not come easy. The possible effects would be slow, gradual, incremental – analogous, if you like – and impossible to measure in any reliable way. Nevertheless, it may still be worthwhile to consider the perspective it offers.

Journalistic educational institutions might profit from introducing the perspective in order to show future journalists the wide interpretational space of the journalistic profession. Most importantly, perhaps, the inclusion of the perspective in courses on journalistic cross-border collaboration would make increased emphasis on language and other intercultural skills – historical knowledge included – an absolute necessity. It does not suffice for journalists to master only their mother tongue and some degree of English if they are to take part in cosmopolitan journalistic efforts in continuous interaction with critically minded audiences, rooted in a multiplicity of cultures. At the end of the day, increased language and other intercultural skills in journalists might open the door to a multiplicity of approaches to cross-border journalism, disturbing, disconcerting, delimiting and enriching each other.

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