# ‘X Journalism’.
# Exploring journalism’s diverse meanings through the names we give it

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**Abstract**

In this article we propose *X Journalism*, a observational tool and concept that owes its existence to a simple observation: that the evolution of journalism is accompanied by the emergence of ever-new journalism-related terms, i.e. combinations of the word ‘journalism’ with a particular modifying term that (are supposed to) represent and signal a certain specificity and, in a certain time frame, novelty. Examples include ‘robot journalism’, ‘foundation-funded journalism’, ‘cross-border journalismus, or ‘solutions journalism’ – just to name a few. To date, we have collected and mapped approximately 166 X journalisms and have ‘crowd-categorized’ them into clusters according to the different aspects they refer to. We discuss X Journalism as a concept, introduce our mapping approach, and show how it can help us come to terms with journalism’s increasing complexity, capture the diversity of the field, trace its constant evolution, and identify patterns and interrelations between these different movements and occurrences. Through a test case with audience-related X journalisms we demonstrate an empirical application, illustrate the theoretical compatibility of X Journalism, and suggest a research agenda that highlights potentials for X Journalism-driven research.

## 1. Introduction

Journalism research has done much conceptual work to ‘tame’ journalism’s complexity so that it might make sense of and integrate ever-new developments and journalistic forms into existing approaches. Much attention has been paid to discussions on what journalism is and what it is not. This kind of demarcating and (re-)conceptualizing is also precisely what the programme of journalism research has always been about.

The complexity that requires taming is mostly due to digital transformation, and it is especially apparent in articles that (re-)compile journalism’s current technology-driven developments that emerge in and with a continuously changing media environment. These are, for example, related to ‘computational and algorithmic journalism’ (Anderson 2013), to the ‘quantitative turn in journalism’ (Coddington 2015), or, on an all-encompassing level, to

the 'worlds of journalism' (Lewis and Zamith 2017); all attempt to come to terms with the sense of 'mess' in both the journalistic field and the academic field that seeks to explore it (Witschge et al. 2018). As a common strategic academic ritual, these conceptual works are often accompanied by research agendas developed against the background of concepts, approaches or theoretical lenses that have been introduced and/or criticized beforehand. This all indicates that as scholars aim to make sense of what they perceive as a messy journalistic field they simultaneously end up further nuancing and complicating it.

This paper has emerged from similar concerns and observations about the unruliness of the field, but follows a different and radically simple approach. Namely, it does not come with a plea for another even more nuanced and granular theoretical concept. Rather, we argue that what we now need is an *observational tool* that allows us, first, to capture the diversity of the field *as a whole* by looking at it from a sufficient distance. Second, the tool should enable us to trace the constant evolution of the field *over time*. And, third, it should help us study journalism *relationally*, that is, identify patterns in and interrelations between all these different movements and occurrences. Such an undertaking is only possible from a meta-perspective.

In this article we adopt just such a perspective and propose a tool and concept like the one outlined above: *X Journalism*. X Journalism as a concept (with a capital 'J') owes its existence to a simple observation: the emergence of ever new X journalisms (with a small 'j'), i.e. combinations of the word 'journalism' with a particular modifying term that (are supposed to) represent and signal a certain specificity and, in a certain time frame, novelty. Examples include the aforementioned 'algorithmic' and 'computational journalism', but also 'robot', 'foundation-funded', 'solutions', or 'cross-border' journalism – just to name a few. This routine of terminological distinction, of course, goes back to the pre-digital era when new terms were coined to signify, for example, the increasing differentiation of journalism practice into print, radio and television reporting and later, the de-differentiation into cross-media newswork. Professional journalism has thus constantly been assigning itself new names – just as its scientific observers have done. The result is an incredible abundance of X journalisms originating from both domains.

This also means that the emergence of a new X journalism can be taken as an indicator that an approach or practice has gained a certain awareness in the field. For example, there is currently a lot of talk about data-related developments reflected in terms such as 'data', 'automated', or 'sensor' journalism, signalling that data-driven practices are increasingly becoming important for the field (Loosen 2018).

X journalisms can be classified into different categories, which, for example, sometimes emphasize a technological development, describe a specific type of relationship between journalism and audiences, focus on how newswork is funded, or imply some form of geographical reference. This characteristic allows us to turn the collection of X journalisms into a relational typology that helps us map, trace, and understand journalism's complexity and transformation over time through the names we give it.

The discussion above describes the premise of the approach and the project that we want to present in this article. We understand our approach as a 'service project' for and with the scientific community as well as the journalistic field it aims to describe and understand. The main purpose of this paper is, therefore, to introduce the X Journalism approach, to present research questions that it can address, and to stimulate the collection of further X journalism terms from around the world.

In the following section, we will introduce X Journalism as a concept (2). Then we will discuss the mapping work that has been already done (3). Through the case of X journalisms that refer to specific understandings of the journalism-audience relationship (4), we will then illustrate the theoretical compatibility of X Journalism (5). We close by suggesting a research agenda that highlights potentials for X Journalism-driven research (6).

## 2. X Journalism as a concept: holistic, observer-related, and a three-dimensional understanding of meaning

The emergence of X journalism terms has arguably gained momentum in recent years. We can understand this as a reflection of journalism's progressive differentiation and as a signal of certain trends in the field. It is also a practice by which researchers and

practitioners alike attempt to keep apace with the dynamics of the field. Coining a new X journalism can also be about building and attracting attention to a brand, either academic or professional (Ahva and Hautakangas 2018).

Therefore, one can always also argue in detail about what a particular X journalism designates (or claims to designate) and whether it can actually be sharply distinguished from neighbouring terms. In fact, such conceptual definition work is often the focus of academic interest and a way to study developments in and of the field much like Coddington (2015) has done with respect to the so-called 'quantitative turn' in journalism, or Borger et al. (2013) have for participatory journalism.

Our approach is similar to this, yet different in one key way. On the one hand, the various X journalisms represent empirical data about the emergence and usage of certain terms, and on the other, X Journalism stands for a *holistic* concept. As such, we understand X journalism terms as observer-related categories, be they journalists' self-descriptions of their own profession, or academics' tools of analysis. We follow a holistic perspective in that X Journalism is not restricted to one particular trend or a certain range of phenomena, such as datafied forms of journalism – but considers every new journalism term that comes up. However, it also works retrospectively: it is possible to trace the historical development of journalism. This can be done, for example, with respect to the differentiation into X journalisms such as 'political', 'economy', 'sports', or 'technology' journalism, which represent editorial departments and reflect topics or societal domains that have become differentiated.

Looking closer at X Journalism as a concept reveals its somewhat paradoxical nature as it represents a *variable constant* which makes it dynamic and stable at the same time. 'Journalism' in this sense represents the constant while the 'X' is the variable. The 'X' is always about a (new) form that – for whatever reason and by whomever – is particularly emphasized. Regardless of this, however, the labeled phenomenon is still referred to as 'journalism'. X journalisms thus share a certain 'family resemblance' (Wittgenstein 1953, 2009) in that they always come back to forms of journalism, but cannot be clearly classified taxonomically and certainly not hierarchically. This is because the differentiating

'X' can be situated on many different levels: while, for example, 'digital journalism', on a technological level, stresses that certain newswork is based on or distributed through digital technologies, 'science journalism' differentiates itself from other forms in the dimension of topics that its reporting is about (while other reporting is not). Additionally, X journalism can exhibit blurred, overlapping boundaries – like 'computational' and 'data' journalism –, which in turn can itself become the subject of investigation (Coddington 2015). In this sense, X journalisms also sensitize us to the relationships *between* them. This is because we can only fully understand a certain X journalism if we at the same time consider – or oscillate between – what is distinguished (the X journalism) and what it is that it is distinguished from (other forms of journalism).

These relations and the resulting network character can be made visible only through a mapping of X journalism terms. Such an exercise can reveal a rhizomatic reference structure (Deleuze and Guattari 1977) in that all terms contain a journalistic concept, but for which no central or *shared* concept of journalism can be assumed.

This, of course, does not mean that there cannot be negotiations over whether a certain X journalism should be considered journalism at all. In fact, this fundamental interrelationship between demarcation and belonging is exactly the question journalism research is concerned with when dealing with boundary work in journalism (Carlson and Lewis 2015). More abstractly, fundamental to any form of identity construction is an interplay of displaying one's identification with whom or what one regards as 'one's kind', and the simultaneous differentiating of oneself from whom or what one perceives as 'other' (Tracy and Trethewey 2005; Zappavigna 2014). This twofold routine is also evident in the use of X journalisms in 'metajournalistic discourse' (Carlson 2016) whenever an X journalism is referred to as a self-description by its advocates or as a category by its critics.

As such, X journalisms are a part of journalistic boundary work and the accompanying discursive struggles for legitimation, authority, and the power to define what counts as (a new form of) journalism (Hanitzsch and Vos 2017). This can be seen in the example of 'pioneer journalists' – a particular group of professionals who incorporate new

organizational forms and experimental practice in pursuit of redefining the field and its structural foundations (Hepp and Loosen 2019): these actors, experimenting, for example, with sensor journalism or the 'journalism of things', are often concerned with a demarcation from what they see as established journalism, which still remains a point of reference – even if only *ex negativo*.

Every X journalism is a distinction, an act of naming, by which emphasis is placed on a particular form, while others are excluded. It is important to note that those 'other journalisms' that are excluded are just as important for the identification of a particular X journalism as is the denomination of the X journalism itself. As such, the X Journalism approach is a simple yet effective way to zoom in journalism's internal complexity without losing perspective of journalism as a whole. The value of collecting such terms increases with the size of the collection which enables us to sound out relationalities between and within certain clusters of X journalism terms.

In this vein, we assume that each term has *meaning* insofar as it denotes a difference – quite simply by the respective specification of the 'X' by someone (for example, a journalist or journalism researcher). To what extent and in which ways this is related to other phenomena is already a specific question of theoretical and practical relevance and highlights the relational value of just such a mapping. This understanding of meaning differs from that in everyday life. Rather, it stands for the distinction between the context of meaning that is currently at the centre of attention (a certain X journalism) which at the same time refers to other possibilities (other X journalism terms). From this point of view, meaning always refers to something specific, something different, which is not a subject at the moment, but which is however carried along as a possibility (Schützeichel 2003).

Following Luhmann (1995, 75 pp.) we can distinguish — and regard as relevant for making sense of X journalisms — three dimensions of meaning: the fact[1], the temporal, and the

[1] It is difficult to translate Luhmann's German term 'sachlich' into an appropriate English word. Luhmann understands 'sachlich' in a broad sense as 'what is the topic or frame of reference?'. Hence, although here we use the translation 'fact dimension' (Luhmann 1995), this must *not* be understood in the sense of 'fact-based' like the English term might suggest. (This is only the case with some domain-specific

social dimension. Put simply, the fact dimension concerns *what* is the case or what is designated as a theme; it structures the reference frame of meaning by dividing between 'this' and 'that'. The temporal dimension indicates *when* something is happening; it differentiates between 'before' and 'after'. The social dimension indicates *who* it is that addresses something, who is the addressee, and/or whom something is about; it allows for the differentiation between 'ego' and 'alter' in social interactions and asks, for example, whether a certain meaning is consensual among actors. All dimensions exhibit several subdimensions and, according to Luhmann, it is important to note that each dimension is meaningful only when combined with the other two; they can only be separated theoretically. Additionally, they operate on the production and the reception margins of communication processes (Kneer and Nassehi 2000, 79; Lee 2000).

In our approach, and with respect to the fact dimension, the respective 'X' stands for *what* an X journalism term designates and in relation to which broader context or (theoretical) framework; in some cases this can reveal whether the term is used as a democratic, economic, or cultural notion, for example. In temporal terms, it can be relevant *when* a term appears, changes, and possibly disappears again and, on a superordinate level, whether time periods can be identified in which the emergence of X journalisms accelerates (for example, in relation to changes in the media environment). The *who*, finally, points to questions such as which actors are using an X journalism term and who is addressed and in which context, and perhaps what the motives are behind it. Altogether, this also allows us to differentiate between instances in which journalism observes *itself* and those in which it is observed *by others*, for example, by politicians (such as in the attempt to identify particular forms of societally relevant journalism) or researchers (when attempting to identify particular forms of societally relevant journalism, for example). As Lee (2000, 321) notes with reference to Luhmann, "[s]elf-description occurs when the

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forms of meaning, like in science where 'fact-based' represents the very specification of the fact dimension of meaning for that particular domain. Even then, it is important to note that the fact dimension according to Luhmann does not with any ontological assumptions about what is 'real' or what 'really is the case'. Instead, as in his systems theory in general, it follows a constructivist perspective and is thus understood as strictly observer-related (Scholl and Malik 2020).)

social system stops its operations long enough to consider itself as a unit, giving itself a name and naming what it is not. Self-description involves the writing of a self-reflective narrative, an "autological" text that integrates distinctions made in the social, temporal, and functional [what we refer to as 'fact'] dimensions".

X journalism terms are empirically identifiable communication units that allow us to identify these reflections; and the consideration of all three dimensions of meaning affords us the opportunity to draw a holistic picture of a systemic phenomenon and of who defines which X journalism at which time and in which way, especially in contrast to other X journalisms. Against this background, X Journalism as a concept facilitates the investigation of complex and dynamic processes of the evolution of journalism.

### 3. The X Journalism Project: collecting, categorizing, mapping

The collection of X journalisms that forms the backbone of the X Journalism Project dates back to 2010. The collection began as a byproduct of a research project on audience participation in journalism (Loosen and Schmidt 2012). A first attempt to systematize the term collection was made with the aid of the mind mapping tool 'mind42'. Here we already included references, notable researchers, and implemented relations between particular X journalism terms referring to audience participation in a broad sense. This mind map is still online.[2]

At a conference in Finland in 2018, we revived the X Journalism idea, established our research network, and turned the idea into a research project. Since then the collection of terms has been ongoing through additional online crowd-sourcing (we established the @X_Journalism Twitter account) and observation of the metajournalistic discourse, especially around conferences and meetings.

[2] https://mind42.com/mindmap/f5d46df2-29aa-47d4-b57f-6872ff6cda5a?rel=pmb

This all illustrates the fact that we understand X Journalism as both a relatively simple observational tool and as a concept that principally also offers fundamental groundwork which can be the starting point for various theoretical and empirical research activities. However, this requires a methodically adhered mapping approach. For many years mapping has been popularly harnessed as a general descriptive tool in media and communications research. Typically the term is used without further theoretical implications, just as a reference to the process and output of 'charting' media and communications related data. Examples include topics as diverse as the geo-cultural mapping of different kinds of journalism cultures (Hanitzsch et al. 2011), media accountability in Europe (Eberwein et al. 2011), news websites with respect to their online-specific capabilities (Humprecht and Esser 2018), or the mapping of actor roles in social media (Bechmann and Lomborg 2013). In recent years, mapping has been used both as a term and a method, especially in connection with big data approaches to mapping the twittersphere (Bruns, Burgess & Highfield 2014) and 'public web spaces' (Rogers 2010), which are generally combined with the visual mapping of networks or other instances.

***From crowdsourcing to categories***

To date, we have collected approximately 166 X journalisms, and our database is constantly expanding. We have inductively, iteratively, and consensually 'crowd-categorized' them into clusters according to the different aspects they refer to. In so doing, not only do we provide an overview of X journalism terms but, more importantly, we understand the resulting typology as an attempt to keep pace with the complexity and dynamics of the field. However, these categories are also generally open to expansion and could, theoretically speaking, be defined differently.

Our eight categories used to cluster X journalisms refer to the fact dimension of meaning we introduced above: they cluster the terms in relation to *what* their 'X' primarily stands for.[3] This includes categories that address time-related (category 8) or social aspects

[3] This is not to say that the other dimensions of meaning are not relevant to 'understand' a particular X journalism (in temporal terms, for instance, an 'X' can be characterized by certain production routines, and in

(category 4), because at this meta-level of categorizing X journalisms, the temporal and social dimension comprise other aspects as we will see below.

The list is sorted in descending order according to how many X journalisms have been assigned to each category. Since the collection was initially concentrated on contemporary terms – especially those linked to technology and data or audiences – and because we have not yet carried out a systematic historical search for X journalisms, there does exist a certain bias; the X in an X journalism term can refer to:

1. a specific **motivation or reporting style** (e.g., 'solutions', 'green', 'partisan' journalism, but also classical forms, such as investigative journalism); (62 cases)
2. a (novel) **technology or data-led approach** used at different stages of the journalistic production process, for example, for gathering or presenting news (e.g., 'sensor', 'drone', 'augmented' journalism); (27 cases)
3. a **thematic focus or beat** (e.g. 'politics', 'sports', 'technology' journalism); (23 cases)
4. a particular kind of **audience relationship** in terms of participatory openness, publics reached, etc. (e.g., 'engagement', 'millennial', 'citizen' journalism); (21 cases)
5. a particular type of **(distribution) medium or channel** ('print', 'TV', 'Facebook', 'Snapchat' journalism) (21 cases)
6. a distinct form of **organizational or economic model** in terms of a particular funding or business arrangement, structure or process of newswork, etc. (e.g., 'crowdfunded', 'post-industrial', 'process' journalism); (20 cases)
7. a reference to a particular **place or locus** of journalism or stressing the decreasing importance of place when it comes to news use (e.g. 'hyperlocal', 'global', 'mobile' journalism); (13 cases)

social terms, it could mean its reporting is of interest to only a specific group of people, for example). However, if we look at X journalisms holistically from a meta-perspective and in relation to each other, the 'X', no matter what it may denote, always stands for the fact dimension of meaning.

8. a **time-related dimension** as expressed in 'slow journalism' or 'real-time journalism', which refers to the speed of journalistic production and publication cycles. (3 cases)

We do not understand these clusters as being particularly distinct – this would contradict the premise of understanding X journalisms as observer-related categories to which different meanings can be ascribed. One could, for example, discuss whether 'Facebook journalism' and 'mobile journalism' do not also fall under the category of technology, or whether 'crowdfunded journalism' stands for a particular kind of economic model rather than a specific type of audience-relationship. In any case, terms that fall into the respective clusters have a certain 'family resemblance' in the sense that they carry 'X's' that refer to the same aspect, but they do not determine them entirely or even sufficiently.

However, so far these eight categories cluster X journalisms in relation to the fact dimension of meaning. To also acknowledge their temporal and social dimensions of meaning requires additional (meta)data and a more detailed examination of who uses a particular X journalism term and how, and in which time period it emerged or disappeared. In the following, we will demonstrate how we have implemented this within the proposed framework by creating a database.

***Database and automated data collection***

At the core of our archive we use a simple collaborative spreadsheet to manage our collection of X journalism terms. The changes made to the spreadsheet at the same time document what we have learned with regard to X journalisms as data. Enriching our collection with metadata using computational means, we plan to present the results in a data-driven visualization.[4] In this section, we will further elaborate on the set of metadata as it currently stands, the code used to enrich X journalism terms, our experience with various APIs, and an outlook on the automation of the process as our database continues

[4] https://xjournalism.org

to grow. A current snapshot of the database in .csv format as well as the code are available on Github.[5]

At this stage, the spreadsheet contains a unique identifier per X journalism, the term itself, up to two tags which represent our eight categories introduced above, names of notable persons or concepts associated with a given term, alternative spellings, the year of first mention, the number of scientific results for a given term, and up to three academic references. While we manually researched the most relevant references according to Google Scholar's ranking, we used code to speed up and automate the collection of metadata. Following the three dimensions of meaning previously established, we wanted to find more information on a) the temporal dimension, or the point in time when these terms first appeared and b) the social dimension with respect to the level of scientific attention they generate.

Querying databases about our terms was not a trivial task. When it comes to searches for text within text, the problems of disambiguation and anaphora resolution are evident (Mitkov 2014). In our case the search term is a 2-gram (a sequence of two words) which makes it difficult to generate empirically valid results. Some X journalisms are more specific, like "gonzo journalism" while others are more ambiguous, such as "new journalism". How do we ensure that results include the intended definition and not something else? To maximize precision, we assumed APA style capitalization and wrapped our query in quotation marks to indicate that we queried for exact matches. By either consulting documentation or running queries both with and without these properties we established that all sources were able to deliver exact matches.

Using Node[6] we then built several scripts to automate the search of our X journalism terms. We decided on the New York Times Search API[7], dating back to 1851, as our "temporal" source and extracted time stamps for the earliest mention of each term. Google

[5] https://github.com/leibniz-hbi/xjournalism-data
[6] https://nodejs.org/en
[7] https://developer.nytimes.com/apis

Scholar[8], while severely limited in its filtering and sorting options, gave us a general idea of scientific interest by the number of search results per term. Exploring the Google Ngram Viewer[9] (an index of n-gram time series data offered by Google as a byproduct of their catalog of digitized books, cf. Sparavigna et al. 2015) turned out to be problematic as its corpus ends in 2008. This is not ideal, as the journalism landscape has appeared to be especially dynamic in recent years (Lewis and Zamith 2017). Still, the data shows valuable historic trends well suited for display as sparklines or other types of compact visualizations. A general surge in relative hits since the 1990s demonstrates how journalism has diversified in recent years. We quickly discarded Wikidata[10], a knowledge base of linked data concepts, as a source for our queries. Here, concept identifiers[11] are needed to achieve workable results. At the time of writing, the availability of concept data for our journalism terms is sparse.

In visualizing the temporal data from the New York Times API we found interesting results that could be useful in further research. For example, we identified a cluster of first mentions in the year 1964 for terms like 'science journalism' or 'crusader journalism'. However, a cursory glance of the matching articles did not reveal a certain correlation or linking event. Overall, we learned more about the semantic intricacies of our terms as data and explored multiple avenues for making sense of the metadata. Although the process of enhancing X Journalisms with metadata in this way cannot be fully automated, the generated code assists in updating the growing collection of terms. Having reached a stable schema, we are now exploring data visualizations. The results will be published on our project website along with a searchable wiki.[12]

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[8] https://scholar.google.com

[9] https://books.google.com/ngrams

[10] https://wikidata.org

[11] https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Wikidata/Notes/URI_scheme

[12] https://xjournalism.org; we are currently developing our website and in particular the visualizations in cooperation with Lorenz Matzat's software company "Lokaler", which develops the visualizations as an interactive web widget. It depicts the X journalism terms on a vertical timeline, on which each term appears as a dot, for which further information can be displayed.

## 4. A test case: audience-related X journalisms

The clustering of the terms into a typology was the first step in the mapping exercise. A second step is to examine what occurs within distinct clusters. In this section we will show how the analysis of X journalism terms within the audience-relationship category can shed more light on the factual, social, and temporal differentiations in meaning that signify the different terms. In so doing, we hope to illustrate the heuristic and analytical value of X Journalism as a concept, applied here to the *scholarly* use of the terms.

In October 2018, we searched the literature database EBSCO Communication and Mass Media Complete[13] with all 24 X journalisms that we had by then identified as referring to a particular kind of audience or audience-relationship. The searches were conducted on titles, abstracts, and keywords for each of the terms. We excluded 123 search results from non-academic sources such as trade magazines, and ended up with a total of 822 mentions of audience-related X journalisms in 695 different scientific journal articles, book chapters, and conference papers, with 'peer-to-peer journalism' and 'wiki journalism' not being found at all (see Table 1).

| Rank | X journalism/ search term(s) | No. of academic papers mentioning X journalism | Year of first mention |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Citizen journalism | 289 | 2006 |
| 2 | Public journalism | 184 | 1995 |
| 3 | Participatory journalism | 112 | 1998 |
| 4 | Civic journalism | 88 | 1995 |
| 5 | Community journalism | 57 | 1975 |
| 6 | Network(ed) journalism | 29 | 2007 |
| 7 | Interactive journalism | 12 | 2006 |
| 8 | Grassroots journalism | 11 | 2000 |
| 9 | Collaborative journalism | 8 | 2002 |
| 10 | Reciprocal journalism | 7 | 2014 |
| 11 | Crowd(-)funded journalism | 6 | 2012 |
| 12 | Crowdsourced journalism | 4 | 2010 |
| 13 | Deliberative/Deliberation journalism | 3 | 2012 |
| 14 | Hyperlocal journalism | 3 | 2011 |
| 15 | Conversation(al) journalism | 2 | 2015 |
| 16 | Dialog(ue)(-oriented)/Dialogical journalism | 1 | 2017 |
| 17 | Discursive/Discourse journalism | 1 | 2018 |

[13] EBSCO CMMC comprises around 1,100 journals from media and communication studies (https://www.ebsco.com/products/research-databases/communication-mass-media-complete).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 18 | End-user journalism | 1 | 2013 |
| 19 | Engaged/Engagement journalism | 1 | 2015 |
| 20 | Lay journalism | 1 | 2008 |
| 21 | Millennial journalism | 1 | 2009 |
| 22 | Relational journalism | 1 | 2017 |
| 23 | Peer-to-peer journalism | – | – |
| 24 | Wiki journalism | – | – |

*Table 1: Overview of search results.*

Along the *fact dimension*, we can clearly pinpoint the most mentioned X journalisms as 'citizen', 'public', 'participatory', 'civic', and 'community' journalism. Three of the terms – 'public', 'civic' and 'community' journalism – refer to audience-related news practices or reform movements from the pre-digital era: 'community journalism' typically is about how community members themselves can practice journalism for the community they reside in, whereas 'public' or 'civic' journalism refers to the self-corrective ethos and movement in that underlined the need for professional journalists to better engage with the public as active citizens rather than as passive consumers (Merritt 1995). Here, the focus was shifted from politicians, authorities, and experts to the realm of civic life: citizens, grassroot organizations, schools, and so forth.

Two other top terms – 'citizen' and 'participatory' journalism – tell us more about the role of the audience in the digital era: they usually refer to the ways in which individuals can independently publish news material on the internet or how newsrooms can rely on citizens to send them information, footage or comments that they can then publish (Wall 2017).

Consequently, the most used audience-related X journalism terms portray how the academic field has dealt with the shift from the mass media (few-to-many) to the social media (many-to-many) context.

Along the *social dimension* we collected the names of the publications (listed in the EBSCO database) in which audience-related X journalisms were discussed (see Table 2). *Journalism Practice* is by far the journal that mentioned these subforms most often. This could be evidence of how strongly the academic engagement with these specific X journalisms or X journalisms in general is connected to journalistic practice and not

necessarily to theory. However, this interpretation needs further elaboration. It is also notable that ICA conference papers stand out as another important publication avenue. This indicates that academics have been using the X journalism terms in their mutual, scholarly discussions. To be able to further interpret the social dimension (for example, 'networks' of authors with similar interests, their motivations, consensus or disagreement in the field), qualitative analysis could be conducted on the key arguments or points of criticism around specific X journalism terms, or the key addressees of the texts: are they primarily written for other scholars and students, or for reporters and managers in the industry?

| Rank | Title of venue | Total no. of audience-related X journalisms mentioned in publications from that venue |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Journalism Practice | 107 |
| 2 | Papers presented at International Communication Association's annual conferences | 68 |
| 3 | Journalism | 63 |
| 4 | Journalism Studies | 51 |
| 5 | Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly | 51 |
| 6 | Newspaper Research Journal | 38 |
| 7 | New Media & Society | 29 |
| 8 | Journalism & Mass Communication Educator | 21 |
| 9 | Pacific Journalism Review | 13 |
| 10 | International Journal of Communication & Journal of Mass Media Ethics | 13 |

*Table 2: Top 10 venues for works on audience-related X journalisms.*

Our quantitative mapping proved most insightful in relation to the *temporal dimension* of meaning: we see that the four oldest terms are also among the top five most-mentioned terms. The first academic publication to mention an audience-related X journalism dates back to as early as 1975 with an article from the *Journalism Educator* on how students from Arizona University took over Tombstone weekly *Epitaph* as a project in 'community journalism' ("Students take over Tombstone 'Epitaph" 1975, 3). Over the next twenty years, 'community journalism' appears to have remained the only audience-related X journalism attracting scholarly attention: the next appearances – 'public' and 'civic' journalism – were first mentioned in 1995 (by Lambeth and Craig in *Newspaper Research Journal* and Arena in

*Political Communication*), and 'participatory journalism' in 1998 (by Dardenne in the *History of Mass Media in the United States: An Encyclopedia*).

The real peak of audience-related X journalisms, however, was only after the turn of the millennium. This is not surprising, since in 2000 the two purely journalism-focused journals, *Journalism* and *Journalism Studies*, were launched, and then succeeded by *Journalism Practice* in 2007 and *Digital Journalism* in 2013, which crucially expanded the opportunities for publishing journalism-related research in general. In this publication context, by far the most-mentioned term, 'citizen journalism', was first mentioned in 2006 (by Deuze in an ICA conference paper, and by Nip in *Journalism Studies).* By then, technological development in online interaction and self-publishing had brought journalism's audience relationship to the limelight again. New opportunities afforded by the internet and related hopes for the democratization of journalism sparked a great deal of scholarly interest (e.g. Ahva 2011; Deuze et al. 2007; Haas 2005; Singer et al. 2011).

Furthermore, looking at when the different X journalisms were first used in an academic publication, we can distinguish between five phases of varying length (*temporal dimension*), each of which is characterized by the emergence of two to six new terms that seem to refer to the same particular facet (*fact dimension*) of journalism's relationship to and understanding of its audience (*social dimension*) (see Figure 1):

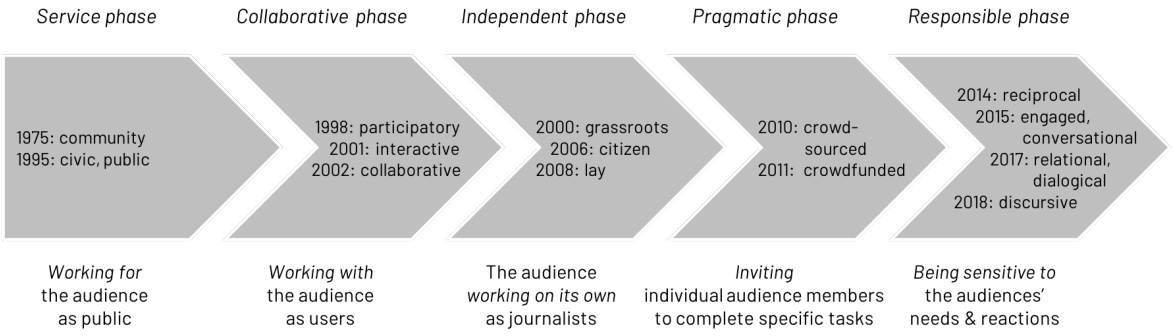


*Fig. 1: Five phases of audience-related X journalisms.*

The changes from one phase to the next represent certain shifts of focus with newly introduced and scholarly researched audience-related X journalisms differentiating

themselves from those from the phase before in the three dimensions of meaning. In these sometimes overlapping transitions, the meaning of the journalism-audience relationship, or at least the parts of it that are considered important, changed. It appears there was an initial shift from understanding the audience as a collective and democratic force towards a more individualized image of the audience as networked users and consumers, who then became shrewd and numerous enough (a crowd) to be given designated tasks in terms of background work or funding. Interestingly, research shows that audience engagement – a core aspect of many audience-oriented X journalisms – has experienced a similar reframing from a normative-political to a strategic-economic meaning: nowadays, newsrooms often engage users either to have them help distribute content through sharing (Krumsvik 2018) or to build a community around the medium and turn occasional visitors into subscribers or premium members (Malmelin and Villi 2015). The last phase highlights that the competition, and perhaps the culture of, the digital realm requires that more attention is paid to the audience's needs in a more empathetic manner and acknowledgement is made of the reciprocity of the journalism-audience relationship. Beyond the time covered by our mapping, we might now be witnessing a phase in which (some) forms of audience participation in journalism are conceptualized as outright 'dark' or counter-democratic (e.g. Quandt 2018).

From X Journalism's holistic perspective it would make the most sense and would probably be most revealing to connect and compare these investigations with the same analyses on other clusters of X journalisms: which X journalisms, for instance, emerge, vanish, or change in meaning in the categories of 'technology and data' or 'organization and business model' before, during or after developments in the audience-relationship cluster? And what does this tell us about the interrelations between technological, organizational/economical, and audience-related transformations?

All that said, we realize the limitations of our approach. With the type of database mapping described above, validity relies on what is included in the database. More importantly, our mapping strictly focuses on when a term gained *academia's* attention which does not necessarily coincide with when it gained prominence in the field of *practice*.

After this empirical case study, we would now like to illustrate the ways in which X Journalism is compatible with different theories.

## 5. Illustrating the theoretical compatibility of X Journalism

We understand X Journalism first and foremost as a descriptive and theory-agnostic approach that is compatible with various theoretical approaches. We have already made clear that our primary view on X Journalism is a constructivist one which considers X journalism terms as observer-related and process-related categories rather than ontological realities. This is, however, an epistemological premise which one does not necessarily have to follow in order to make use of X Journalism as a tool and concept. To demonstrate the theoretical compatibility of X Journalism, we will briefly outline in the following how X Journalism can be used within different theoretical frameworks. What questions does, for example, systems theory pose to X Journalism, and which questions would field theory ask, and how would a figurational approach deal with X Journalism?

*Systems theory*, for example, would use X journalisms from a differentiation-theoretical and evolutionary perspective, looking, for instance, for co-evolutionary patterns between media change and changes in journalistic practice in the form of de- and re-differentiation (Scholl and Malik 2020; Loosen 2015). Thus, from a systems-theoretical perspective, one would, for example, ask to what extent developments around certain X journalisms reflect journalism's adaptation to changes in its environment. One possible interpretation is that specific X journalisms (such as data-related X journalisms) reflect broader societal trends of the datafication of society. Journalism responds to these trends through its own means, for example, with structural changes such as the implementation of new professional roles in the newsroom for handling data. From a systems-theoretical perspective, one overarching question would always be whether and to what extent such structural changes also contribute to changes in journalism's performance and whether this ultimately may also lead to a change (e.g. in the form of an expansion) in the function of journalism for society (Diakopoulos 2019; Loosen 2018).

Another variation on the theory of societal differentiation is Bourdieu's *field theory*, which has found various applications in journalism research (Benson and Neveu 2005; Hanitzsch 2016). Seen through a field-theoretical lens, certain X journalisms appear as professional milieus, that is, groups of journalists who have similar ideas of journalism's social identity and its societal function and share comparable professional role conceptions. Moreover, field-theory-inspired research would be interested in how different individual and corporate actors are differently equipped with (different forms of) capital in order to locate a particular X journalism within the journalistic field, for example, between the intellectual and the commercial poles (Bourdieu 2005). Of particular interest for the examination of X journalisms is the idea of fields as relational and dynamic. As a consequence, power relations and positions change with each new actor who enters the field. Field theory would, then, analyze how and to what extent the relational structure of the field forces actors to change their position and identity in comparison with other actors; something that is observable with any X journalism that reaches a certain attention threshold and at a certain point of development is also attested structure-building power for the field (like it is currently the case with automated journalism and, occasionally, with investigative journalism). A useful blueprint for the continuation of field theory and X Journalism is a study by Marchetti (2005) in which he provides a categorization of sub-fields of specialized journalism, i.e. journalism with a specific thematic focus or beat.

A *figurational approach* as introduced by Hepp and Hasebrink (2017) into media and communications research would reconstruct and analyze particular X journalisms as specific communicative figurations characterized by a certain actor constellation (for example, editors, developers, users, community managers, media organizations) rooted in (communicative) practices ( journalistic practices making use of particular media or technological tools, for example) and defined by particular frames of relevance or meaning orientations (in our case the respective 'X') which orient these practices (see for a figurational approach on 'pioneer journalism', Hepp and Loosen 2019). Consequently, such a figurational analysis follows an actor-centered and practice-theoretical approach while emphasizing on communicative practices based on a particular media ensemble relevant to the social domain under investigation. This means that with this approach X journalisms

would always be investigated with regard to their particularities with regard to media technologies.

## 6. Conclusion and future research

X Journalism owes its existence to a simple observation: that the evolution of journalism is accompanied by the emergence of ever-new journalism-related terms. The collection, mapping, and categorization of these various X journalisms can help us come to terms with journalism's increasing complexity, capture the diversity of the field, trace its constant evolution, and identify patterns and interrelations between these different movements and occurrences.

However, this can only succeed from an inclusive perspective which arises when we do not only concentrate on one particular 'X' that is considered relevant at a specific time, but try to capture the dynamics in their entirety. If we concentrate too much on the 'X' in journalism research, i.e. on what is regarded as new and 'innovative' at a given time, we risk neglecting and not adequately grasping the very character of journalism's ongoing transformation.

X Journalism is, therefore, supposed to be both a relatively simple *observational tool* and a *concept*. As an observational tool it makes use of the fact that the already existing and newly emerging X journalism terms that go along with journalism's evolution represent empirically identifiable communication units that are relatively easy to identify. It becomes a concept if we equip it with the following characteristics: it is holistic in that it is not focused on one 'X', but intended to capture and map all X journalisms; it is observer-related because it is sensitive to the fact that each X journalism is always brought to the world by someone and may be understood differently by different actors; and it considers the meaning of X journalisms as a product of the fact, social, and temporal dimensions of meaning, which in its most basic form acknowledges that the meaning of an X journalism depends on who uses which term at what time. Therefore, an X journalism can mean different things to different actors (at different points in time) and can also become the subject of negotiation processes in the field as well as in academia.

Furthermore, it would be possible to extend the mapping of X journalisms to different languages/languages spaces in order to open up a spatial dimension of meaning. This appears especially important when considering that X Journalism so far is limited to English and is, thus, likely to be dominated by a Western perspective.

All this makes it clear that we understand the collection of X journalisms not only as a purely descriptive exercise, but as a conceptual-analytical approach that can provide the groundwork for various theoretical and empirical research activities. As a holistic concept, it is comparatively powerful as it can enable and stimulate research and can be used for many different purposes, for instance to:

- reconstruct the strategies behind the use of X Journalism terms in academia and in the field of journalism itself;
- analyze what types of terms (dis)appear at what time, e.g. to identify and differentiate between trends/phases in journalism's transformation;
- distinguish between terms of unchanged relevance and those with shorter lifespans;
- identify particular patterns of (re-)differentiation within the eight clusters or categories of X journalism terms;
- compare internationally the significance of particular X journalisms in different countries and journalism cultures;
- use as stimulus material in empirical research, e.g. in interviews with practitioners to create mind maps for related terms;

The diversity of the theoretical, methodological, and practical application contexts of X Journalism as a concept owes itself to the simple idea of mapping X journalisms in order to explore journalism's diverse meanings through the names we give it.

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