

Chapter 5

Investigative journalism and the watchdog role of news media

Between acute challenges and exceptional counterbalances

Achilleas Karadimitriou, Torbjörn von Krogh, Christian Ruggiero,
Cecilia Biancalana, Mauro Bomba, & Wai Han Lo

Abstract

This chapter investigates to what extent leading news media advocate investigative journalism and perform appropriately their watchdog function, assuming that in various media markets these core journalistic practices are currently adapting to an austere (compared with the past) media ecosystem, as well as to a differentiated newsroom role against a background of digital revolution in the media field. By means of digital tools, journalistic investigation has been facilitated to a great extent. However, the acute crises afflicting the media industries have operated as a severe deterrent to costly investigative journalism. Given the prevalent financial constraints in media markets, testified to by journalists in most countries participating in the 2021 Media for Democracy Monitor (MDM), investigative reporting seems to have become a luxury process, despite it being a journalistic bulwark against fake news narratives and unethical standards in media organisations. We conclude the chapter with a discussion of the existence of investigative reporting being proportional to the financial strength that characterises the media organisations at the national level, and that targeted public subsidies, where applicable, seem to have proved effective during times of economic recession.

Keywords: investigative journalism, newsroom watchdog role, in-depth reporting, power control, fourth estate

Introduction

Investigative journalism and the newsroom's watchdog role have traditionally been considered instrumental to the healthy functioning of democracy, since journalism and the democratic process are highly interconnected (Donsbach & Patterson, 2004). By fulfilling the watchdog role, journalists act as the fourth estate, disclosing wrongdoing and scrutinising elites in order to hold

Karadimitriou, A., von Krogh, T., Ruggiero, C., Biancalana, C., Bomba, M., & Lo, W. H. (2022). Investigative journalism and the watchdog role of news media: Between acute challenges and exceptional counterbalances. In J. Trappel, & T. Tomaz (Eds.), *Success and failure in news media performance: Comparative analysis in the Media for Democracy Monitor 2021* (pp. 101–125). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855589-5>

the powerful accountable (Waisbord, 2000). Worldwide, the professional newsmaking process is characterised by research and investigation. These are core journalistic practices that do not remain static, but evolve following the evolutionary course of the media markets and communications technologies. They take new forms based on the emergence of new digital tools (Broussard, 2015; Carlson, 2015; Stray, 2019) – for example, the artificial intelligence algorithmic processes converting data into narrative news texts. At the same time, they are being challenged within the participatory media culture where the speed of journalists in releasing the news has become a top priority (Ali & Hassoun, 2019).

These transformations intensify the questions being raised as to whether journalism constitutes a profession based on conventional professional criteria (Anderson & Schudson, 2019; Meyers et al., 2012) and bring to the fore the discussion which relates journalism to tendencies of professionalisation (Aldridge & Evetts, 2003) and deprofessionalisation (Witschge & Nygren, 2009) or with professional competencies being at stake (Eide, 2010). However, despite the challenges encountered by contemporary media professionals across the various media systems, journalism has been associated with a great variety of values (such as truth and accuracy, independence, impartiality, and accountability) at a cross-national level. Particularly, the provision of political information and the monitoring of government actions and decisions have been identified as widely accepted elements of journalism's role around the world (Hanitzsch et al., 2011).

Based on that perception, traditional and contemporary discourse about journalism conceptualises investigative journalism as a distinct part within the field of news media (Bjerknes, 2020) and even as the spearhead of the journalism profession. Journalists engaged in this special strand of news reporting are portrayed as elite explorers or hunters of important news issues, whose experience gives rise to feelings of unquestionable trust. Working as an investigative journalist is usually identified with having a more intrusive, critical, or sceptical mindset, compared with the mentality or outlook adopted by professionals working in conventional or routine reporting (Lanosga et al., 2017). These special attributes of investigative journalists set them apart from ordinary journalists and provide the practice of news coverage with prestige. Investigative journalism seems to embody the watchdog role of journalism and, despite current economic constraints, it is still viewed as having an important role in democratic governance (Carson, 2019).

In theory, investigative journalism benefits democracies by notifying citizens of wrongdoing and holding political actors accountable for their actions (Carson, 2019; Chambers, 2000). However, this type of journalism is not always defined in opposition to officials (Protest et al., 1991). Moreover, while quality investigative journalism is usually associated with the provision of benefits

to democratic governance, its financial value is uncertain. It is no coincidence that the restricted budgets devoted to investigative journalism has led to the weakening of watchdog reporting worldwide (Houston, 2010; Li & Sparks, 2018; Munoriyarwa, 2018; Saldaña & Mourão, 2018) as well as to reduced numbers of staff members (Knobel, 2018). However, research focusing on the watchdog function of journalism has revealed broad support from audiences, at least in the US, related to the concept of media organisations as scrutinisers of powerholders against a background of divergent evaluations among voters regarding the extent to which journalists are currently performing their watchdog role (Jurkowitz & Mitchell, 2020).

This chapter addresses the extent to which the leading news media in 18 countries around the globe advocate investigative journalism and, in particular, the extent to which they appropriately perform their watchdog function. We aim to provide a comparative portrait of the dynamics of media newsrooms performing their watchdog mission and infer the impact on their democratic role. Our investigation is based on secondary data derived from individual country studies and from interviews examining attitudes and perceptions among journalists and editors-in-chief working in leading news media in the different national media markets (Trappel & Tomaz, 2021b, 2021c). These data are part of the 2021 Media for Democracy Monitor (MDM) research project, leading us to comparative findings which are based on two indicators (C7 and C9), referring to the sufficiency of means available to leading news media in order to efficiently exercise investigative reporting.

MDM Indicators and related research questions addressed in this chapter:

(C7) The watchdog and the news media's mission statement

Does the mission statement of the media company or the newsroom contain provisions for playing an active role as watchdog, for investigative journalism, or for other forms of power control? Does the mission statement have any relevance in practice? (Trappel & Tomaz, 2021a: 50)

(C9) Watchdog function and financial resources

Are there specific and sufficient financial resources for exercising investigative journalism or other forms of power control? (Trappel & Tomaz, 2021a: 52)

The perceptions relating to investigative journalism among scholars and media practitioners are not identical, as the practice of investigative reporting is experienced differently in various parts of the world, depending on the special characteristics of the media environment (Adibah et al., 2014). Moreover, while digital tools have greatly facilitated data investigation, the financial crises afflicting the media industries have operated as a deterrent to costly investigative journalism.

Defining the watchdog function of journalism and investigative reporting

Journalists, as watchdogs and investigators, perform similar – but not identical – tasks when trying to detect and describe corruption and abuse of power. The watchdog function of journalism was already present when the concept of a more thorough examination of facts – investigative reporting – began to evolve in the beginning of the twentieth century. Traces of the watchdog ideal are even found in the records of a libel trial against a journalist in Massachusetts in 1822 (Dicken-Garcia, 1989). Watchdog journalism has been defined as “(1) independent scrutiny by the press of the activities of government, business, and other public institutions, with an aim toward (2) documenting, questioning, and investigating those activities, in order to (3) provide publics and officials with timely information on issues of public concern” (Bennett & Serrin, 2005: 169).

But watchdog journalism does not need to be investigative. The most important ingredient, according to Bennett and Serrin (2005), is the mindset of the reporter, exemplified by veteran *Washington Post* reporter Murray Marder (1919–2013):

It starts with a state of mind, accepting responsibility as a surrogate for the public, asking penetrating questions at every level, from the town council to the state house to the White House, in corporate offices, in union halls and in professional offices and all points in between. (Marder, 1998: para. 8)

William Thomas Stead, exposing child prostitution in London in the 1880s, muckrakers in the US at the turn of the century, and Ester Blenda Nordström, working undercover in Sweden as a maid on a farm in 1914, are pioneers in what is called – since at least the 1960s – investigative journalism. The term depicts reporting that goes further than routine gathering and evaluation of facts. Investigative reporting differs from daily news reporting in terms of the topics covered, the information-gathering techniques employed, and the degree of research depth leading to the final output. Investigative reporting embraces issues of public importance about wrongdoing, “affecting the citizenry” (de Burgh, 2003: 806), or “the public interest” (Waisbord, 2002: 277), usually topics that the authorities seek to keep in obscurity. When disclosed, these topics are presented in more extensive texts than other issues (Tong, 2011; Wang, 2016).

Definitions of investigative journalism vary over time and by origin. A widely accepted definition is the one stated by Robert William Greene, reporter and editor at *Newsday* and one of the founders in 1975 of the American organisation Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE), emphasising the component of revealing secrets:

It is the reporting, through one's own work product and initiative, [of] matters of importance which some persons or organisations wish to keep secret. (Greene, 1983: foreword)

This definition, inspired by IRE, was by and large adopted by the pioneering associations of investigative journalism, set up 30 years ago in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden.¹ The focus on secrets soon vanished, since neglected structural problems were also important to examine.

Some scholars add a moral dimension to their definition of investigative journalism, incorporating the task of journalists to express moral judgment about potential misdoing or malefaction (Coleman & Wilkins, 2002). David Protesse (1991: 5) called it “the journalism of outrage [...] that probes the boundaries of America's civic conscience” and felt kinship with the muckrakers from 100 years ago. Ettema and Glasser (1988) describe investigative journalism as being characterised by a moralising impact, supporting virtues such as the value of justice by exposing news stories of terrible villainy with journalists often being in the context of “tensions between detached observation and active moral agency” (Glasser & Ettema, 1989: 15).

The Flemish-Dutch association for investigative journalism started in 2002 and declared that “investigative journalism is critical and in-depth” (van Eijk, 2005: 22). The association wished to avoid discussions “on who is a ‘real’ investigative journalist and who is not” and shied away from the IRE definition (van Eijk, 2005: 22). They preferred a broader approach, adaptable to different cultures and countries and including the examination of institutions and changes in societal trends.

This orientation can also be found in latter-day international organisations that cooperate in analysing vast amounts of data. The Global Investigative Journalism Network assents to “systematic, in-depth, and original research and reporting” (GIJN, 2020: para. 2). Moreover, investigative journalism has been conceived of as a means for media professionals to exert control over the mistakes and arbitrariness of those in power or the excesses of influential private interests. Disclosing infringements, namely wrongdoing or irregularities, that otherwise would remain unknown is a key practice of investigative reporters (de Burgh, 2000, 2008; Ettema & Glasser, 1998; Schudson, 2008). Investigative journalists, compared with journalists as a whole, are more inclined to maintain the view that media should be more influential on public opinion and that policy reforms are more often feasible through a cooperation plan between journalists and policy-makers, rather than through public mobilisation tactics implemented by journalists (Lanosga et al., 2017).

Although Robert William Greene and IRE have proved influential in terms of how investigative journalism is traditionally perceived, there is no holistic model reflecting common practices in developed and developing democracies

(Waisbord, 2000). However, what is widely acknowledged by academics and practitioners, among others, is the systematic and time-consuming nature of this special type of journalism (Anderson & Benjaminson, 1976; Ettema & Glasser, 1998), which is considered to bear significant contributions to democratic governance monitoring the performance of the democratic institutions.

The sociocultural context permitting journalists to act as watchdogs

In theory, media in democracies, especially in emerging ones, are in charge of bridging the gap between citizens and governments. This is reflected in their so-called social accountability role that includes adequately holding public officials to account through the timely coverage of relevant news stories. Fulfilling this role presupposes the provision of information to citizens that will enable them to become active citizens (Malila, 2019).

The watchdog role of journalists (Drüeke & Weber, 2016) is widely recognised as a structural function of the journalism profession; nevertheless, its concrete implementation requires certain socioeconomic conditions. For instance, dramatic changes in digital technologies and the rise of new constraints on journalism have resulted in collaborative approaches to investigative work (Carson & Farhall, 2018; Wahl-Jorgensen et al., 2016). Traditionally, the performance of the watchdog role has prerequisites: journalists' limited dependence from political or economic interests, as well as the detachment of journalists from their political orientation with the view to applying certain criteria of news values (such as monitoring the powerholders and presenting the deficiencies of democracy), depicting professionalism (Gerli et al., 2018; Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Additional conditions, necessary for watchdog reporting, are journalistic autonomy and assertiveness. The first one refers to the organisational and institutional independence permitting journalists to scrutinise any public official, public body, or business player, while the second one concerns journalists' capacity to investigate and bring to light information that would otherwise remain unearthed (Pinto, 2008).

According to Nord (2007), several factors influence the development of investigative journalism. For instance, in a country where the media sector is characterised by a strong market mechanism, the press industry may be prone to softer and less serious news stories that are inexpensive to cover. Equally important is the level of journalistic professionalism, which affects the allocation of resources among the news content options (i.e., mainstream news or investigative reporting). Relevant research has also proved that the performance of investigative journalism is influenced by the overall robustness and stability

of the media market. This is obvious in Central and Eastern Europe, where this genre of journalism has a stronger presence in rich and more stable media markets, such as Poland, Estonia, and the Czech Republic, where commercial media organisations appear more efficient in providing investigative reporting (Stetka & Örnebring, 2013). The size of the news media outlets constitutes another important determinant to how investigative reporting is conducted. In the context of regional news organisations, this is reflected in how constraints, such as economic pressures or the close attachment of journalists to the community, have proven to make news outlets less prone to investigative projects (Berkowitz, 2007).

Investigative journalism represents the essence of news media organisations' fourth estate role, but unfortunately, it seems to be traditionally plagued by weaknesses. The major challenges impeding the performance of investigative journalism vary, but include clientelism (Yusha'u, 2009), lack of resources and autonomy, and various legal and political constraints (Waisbord, 2002).

The mainstream news media in Argentina is indicative of this. The Argentinian media market exemplifies a series of common difficulties encountered in the watchdog role of journalism when it is practised in feeble political, economic, and business environments. The leading news media in Argentina is framed by low levels of journalistic autonomy and professionalisation within newsrooms as well as by internal news production mechanisms under the influence of pressures, derived from business interests and from government strategies on news management (Pinto, 2008). Another deterring example is Australia, where investigative journalism in the printed media sector (both prior to and during the global financial crisis) has been unable to adequately perform its role of scrutinising and revealing transgressions of the corporate and financial sector on behalf of the public. This weakness was attributed to the inability of the Australian press to challenge the commercial model of the market, based on advertising, in the context of a precarious economic environment (Carson, 2014). Overall, this imperfect kind of investigative journalism is what Stetka and Ornebring (2013) have called "pseudo-investigative journalism" (see also Gerli et al., 2018) as an existent practice in the media field, which is really concerned with generating profit for publishers and the interests that they represent.

Despite the threats afflicting watchdog journalism in democracies – such as the transformation of truth into a "despised notion" (Leigh, 2019: 1), the instrumentalisation of the media, as well as the decline of the print press and the low level of professionalism (Gerli et al., 2018) – there is also optimism with regards to this particular strand of journalism (Lanosga & Houston, 2017).

Factors affecting investigative journalism and the watchdog function in news media

Based on the previously discussed factors affecting investigative reporting, and hence the performance of the watchdog role of journalists, we provide an outline of country groups derived from the 2021 MDM research findings. Our aim is to provide insights into the key trends, differences, and similarities of how this special journalism genre is treated by the various leading news media organisations of the 18 MDM participating countries (see Table 5.1 in the Appendix).

Journalism as the fourth estate and the role of money

Arguably, there is a lack of criteria for defining investigative journalism, which takes on many forms (Drüeke, 2018). The leading news media in some countries of the 2021 MDM research sample that belong to the so-called Mediterranean type of media system (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) do not have, for example, a consolidated tradition of journalism perceived as fourth estate; they interpret their role in a different way with respect to the standard of providing a full, impartial, and accurate account of news as a vital part of democracy (Newton, 1995). This is the case in Italy, where, with a few exceptions, various forms of “pseudo-investigative” journalism may be found (Padovani et al., 2021), and Greece, where “investigative journalism is the exception rather than the rule” (Papathanassopoulos et al., 2021: 224). This is also the case in Switzerland, where the role of watchdog is understood as “reporting things as they are” (Bonfadelli et al., 2021: 444), rather than being proactive and critical.

Among the participating countries, there are a few cases where watchdog journalism is a central feature and editorial offices attribute significant value to it (e.g., in Austria, Belgium, and Denmark). In others, this commitment of journalistic work seems quite implicit, dictated by the consideration and self-consideration of journalists as watchdogs (e.g., in Australia, Canada, Belgium, Greece, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom). Distinctive is the case of the United Kingdom, where the long tradition of watchdog journalism (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2008) remains unchanged and is treated as a major obligation, despite the economic crisis that has afflicted the media sector. The importance of the watchdog role is often specified in the mission statement of British newspapers; and even when only implicit, it is taken into particular account. As a result, the news media in the United Kingdom are committed to investigative journalism, and broadcast newsrooms invest significant resources in in-depth reporting despite the financial constraints adversely influencing particularly the commercial media sector (Moore & Ramsay, 2021).

In the general European context, the role of journalism as the fourth estate is mainly acknowledged, explicitly or implicitly, as an objective of the leading news media organisations. However, only in few countries do media organisations possess a combination of features such as the availability of financial resources and the tradition of investigative journalism. Indicative cases are Sweden and Denmark, where editorial offices often have at their disposal specific task forces dedicated exclusively to investigative journalism, and at the same time, considerable resources intended for assignments of in-depth reporting (e.g., up to 10% of the annual budget on average in Sweden; Nord & von Krogh, 2021). In Denmark, media representatives state that “investigative journalism is highly prioritised, even more than in the previous years”, since most leading news media (such as the editorial department of the tabloid *Ekstra Bladet*) have created regular task forces engrossed in investigations (Blach-Ørsten et al., 2021: 170–171). Moreover, in Sweden, editors even see a growth in allocated resources and estimate, for example, that about 10 per cent of the reporters working in the leading tabloid *Aftonbladet* and the leading morning daily *Dagens Nyheter* are now members of special units dedicated to investigative reporting. In the public television broadcaster SVT, it is estimated that as much as 20–25 per cent of reporters’ resources are devoted to in-depth investigations (Nord & von Krogh, 2021).

Beyond Europe, and particularly in Hong Kong, journalists recognise the centrality of the watchdog role of journalists and consider it an objective of their profession. Media companies invest considerably in investigative reporting, a trend indicating that these news stories have a strong appeal for their (paying) readers. The example of Hong Kong implies that investigative journalism might be recognised by media professionals as important, even if there are no specific or explicit references to this type of reporting in news organisations’ mission statements. Hong Kong journalists participating in investigative reporting projects are provided with time and funds for travelling abroad, have at their disposal more flexibility and resources to work on their stories – compared with those engaged in conventional reporting – while, at the same time, they are not under pressure to provide content on a daily basis (Lo & Wong, 2021).

Decreasing advertising revenues for commercial media have afflicted newsrooms for many years and have led to less resources for quality journalism and investigative reporting in many countries (Kurtz, 1994; Squires, 1993; Underwood, 1995). However, there are some exceptions where shifted priorities and redirected revenues have instead increased funds and possibilities for investigative journalism. It is not only tradition or a particular journalistic culture that favours investigative journalism. In Germany, for instance, where virtuous newsrooms, such as *Die Zeit*, produce up to 50 investigative reports each year, only 24 per cent of journalists perceive themselves as watchdogs (Weischenberg et al., 2006). However, the particularly favourable financial situ-

ation of some media companies allows investments in specific teams dedicated to investigations. Combating the lack of financial resources in Germany are media organisations resorting to outsourcing investigative reporting to special units (Horz-Ishak & Thomass, 2021).

A similar situation is found in Austria, the only country in the 2021 MDM research sample where both media organisations' personnel and financial resources seem to have increased in the last ten years (Grünangerl et al., 2021). Another exceptional case is the Netherlands, a country experiencing positive trends in the field of investigative journalism due to favourable conditions of the information market, summarised in the description of one of the journalists interviewed: "The profession is considered at its best phase". This allows more than half of the publishing companies to establish ad hoc funds for the creation of task forces engaged in investigative journalism. This is feasible thanks to a system of subsidies in place from the Fund for Special Journalistic Projects (Vandenberghe & d'Haenens, 2021).

In Finland, the financial constraints faced by the media organisations have increased compared with the past; however, there are media outlets allocating provisions to investigative reporting according to ad hoc processes. Public service broadcaster YLE is an exceptional example in carrying out investigative journalism, investing many resources in documentaries and current affairs broadcasts (Ala-Fossi et al., 2021). Ad hoc resource allocation to investigative journalism is also applied in Icelandic media organisations (Jóhannsdóttir et al., 2021).

A special case in the fight against the lack of resources is Chile, where investigative news articles have been given a less prominent status by being replaced by a system of outsourcing to production companies or by purchasing investigative articles from freelancers. Alternative models of financing investigative journalism are also in place here, such as the website *Interferencia*, which employs a financial strategy based on long-term subscriptions. Similarly, the Centre for Investigative Reporting operates a crowd-funding process aimed at financing in-depth reporting (Núñez-Mussa, 2021).

Job stability is also an important factor in fostering investigative reporting. The crucial role played by stable employment conditions is accentuated in countries in which investigative journalism and the role of fourth estate is in early stages. Competing flows of information and digital transformations afflicting most Western countries (excluding the already mentioned exceptions) have led to profound changes in the editorial production routines of newsrooms. Since the 2008 global financial crisis, many editorial offices have suffered cuts in staff, reduction of long-term contracts, and increased use of external collaborators, such as freelancers and trainees (Reinardy, 2012). These changes have caused a shortage of personnel qualified to do investigative journalism and has weakened the job security and stability of journalists in general.

Redundancies and job insecurity at the cost of investigative journalism

The downsizing of editorial offices and a general reduction in positions are often associated with a decline in job performance and satisfaction (Kim, 2003; Reinardy, 2012). Moreover, cuts in staff lead to an increase in tasks and responsibilities for the remaining news workers, a trend particularly evident in many newsrooms. As a result of digitalisation, more tasks are assigned to journalists, while, at the same time, they are required to cultivate new and more elaborate skills. In general, the key trend prevailing in the editorial offices of most of the participating countries is to “do more with less”. This situation naturally risks disadvantaging investigative journalism, which requires time, money, and qualified personnel. The issues brought to light by interviewees in the 2021 MDM project confirm that this is the case. The reduction in newsroom staff has afflicted a wide range of countries – both those with a good state of financial health (such as Iceland or Switzerland), and those where the 2008 financial crisis had harsher implications (such as Greece, Portugal, Italy, and Chile).

In Switzerland, a study on the working conditions of journalists reveals a very low level of satisfaction among print journalists and an even lower one for online journalists (Wyss, 2012). In Canada, an interviewee summarised the condition of the news workers with the emblematic phrase, “everyone’s kind of trying to stay alive and keep their job” (Taylor & DeCillia, 2021: 75). Similar narratives depicting job insecurity are provided by media professionals in Australia, Chile, Belgium, Iceland, Portugal, South Korea, and Italy, as well as in Hong Kong and the United Kingdom, countries in which, however, investigative journalism is still strong.

In several countries, the uncertainty that dominates leading news media and the decline in job security are reflected in the increase in freelancers or journalists hired on a fixed-term basis. These working patterns are adopted in countries with different labour market contexts. While, for instance, in Germany, journalists and freelancers with fixed-term contracts have come to represent an important and recognised part of the media system (Horz-Ishak & Thomass, 2021), Icelandic media do not invest in freelancers and denounce the job insecurity associated with temporary contracts for media professionals (Jóhannsdóttir et al., 2021). While in the Netherlands there is a fierce battle over the fees paid to freelancers (Vandenberghé & d’Haenens, 2021), the National Federation of the Italian Press frames the issue as labour exploitation of the “information riders” (Padovani et al., 2021). Another key trend in the media sector is the policy of replacing experienced journalists with younger ones – for example, in Hong Kong (Lo & Wong, 2021) and Greece (Papathanassopoulos et al., 2021). Junior professionals in general cost less money for the media organisations and, at the same time, are more familiar with new digital technologies.

Notable exceptions are Austria, where journalists enjoy a high level of job security (Grünangerl et al., 2021), and the United Kingdom, where journalists are more likely to have stable rather than temporary employment contracts (Moore & Ramsay, 2021). It seems like no coincidence that in these countries, investigative journalism and the watchdog function of journalism are features treated with greater importance.

The possibility of journalists to attend training courses can play an important role in promoting investigative journalism. In some countries, such as Portugal and the Netherlands, such courses are organised by investigative journalism networks, while in others, such as Denmark and Sweden, investigative journalism associations provide such courses in the context of annual conferences and, at the same time, these are mandatory in journalism studies within universities. The countries where these courses are most available are the same countries where investigative journalism is more productive (e.g., the United Kingdom, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and Hong Kong). However, in all participating countries – with the exception of Italy, where refresher courses on investigative journalism, among other topics, are mandatory for members of the Order of Journalists (Padovani et al., 2021) – participation in training courses, whether organised by editorial offices or other types of organisations, remains optional. In reality, the lack of time and resources often prevent journalists from attending them.

In conclusion, the main obstacles to the full implementation of the fourth estate function of the leading news media are a lack of adequate financial resources and personnel. These conditions in turn increase the workload of journalists and decrease the quality of journalistic work. In addition, they result in job insecurity, which endangers professionalisation within editorial offices. However, the overall image is not as negative as it may seem. Practices of investigative journalism exist in many national contexts, mainly related to the operational status of the public service media (for more on public service media, see Thomass et al., Chapter 9). This is the case, for example, in Australia, Finland, Iceland, Germany, Chile, and Italy.

New patterns of news consumption

Media scholars identify an “audience turn” in journalism in the last decade – that is, journalists have become greatly attentive to audiences, a feature reflected in their journalistic practices. This partly results from public reactions in the form of web metrics having become more visible to editors (Coddington & Lewis, 2020; Costera Meijer, 2020). The importance attached to public preferences is also highlighted by interviewed media professionals in the 2021 MDM country reports. With advertising expenditure in decline, editors turn to media users as a potentially alternative source of revenue (Newman et al., 2020a). Journalism

needs to be “distinctive” against a backdrop of large volumes of free content (Vandenberghé & d’Haenens, 2021: 292) and “an asset in an overall highly competitive market” (Horz-Ishak & Thomass, 2021: 245). Journalism also must be able to turn into “a strategic asset when the business model changes” (Padovani et al., 2021: 375). Interviews with editors and executives in the United Kingdom, Denmark, Italy, and Sweden show that quality journalism is considered the best asset for getting media users to pay for editorial content online. As one editor said, “readers often convert after reading long-form pieces and investigations that force politicians to resign” (Suárez, 2020: 19).

Leading Swedish daily newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* is often referred to as a successful example in studies of strategies with regard to conversion from payment for printed journalism to payment for digital journalism. *Dagens Nyheter* has no fixed paywall, but offers several flexible options (Veseling, 2020). One strategy that has proven successful is to publish an article that attracts the attention of a large audience, at first available for free, but set behind a paywall after a few hours. The decision to turn a free-access article into subscription-based is made by an editor with the support of an artificial intelligence algorithm. Documentation related to which kind of articles may lead to the highest number of conversions from free-of-charge content to paid subscriptions shows that unique, investigative articles are at the top of the list.

Two factors that may have contributed to increasing investigative reporting in Denmark and Sweden are combined patterns of news consumption and a renewed tradition of investigative journalism. Denmark and Sweden belong to the top four countries in the European Union regarding daily consumption of written press and the top three countries regarding daily use of the Internet (Eurobarometer, 2020). They also score high on the list of countries where media users are most willing to pay for news, with the average for the four Nordic countries included in the 2021 MDM being 26 per cent, whereas the average for France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Greece is 11 per cent (Newman et al., 2020b). In the Nordics, associations for investigative journalism were established 30 years ago, emerging from the bottom up by practising reporters aiming to build a tradition through education, sharing methods, and holding national seminars for students as well as veteran reporters (Sørmo Strømme, 2020). After 10–20 years of operation, these associations are accepted in the media ecology, receive funding from media organisations, and are institutionalised parts of the media system.

Conclusions

The watchdog role of journalists is widely recognised as a cornerstone of the journalism profession in the majority of the countries participating in the 2021 MDM research project, and it is mostly considered an important objective of

the journalistic mission by journalists themselves (e.g., in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden). The research data confirm that investigative journalism requires a considerable number of resources and time, as well as the opportunity to attend training sessions, combined with general job security.

In today's legacy media organisations, the watchdog role played by investigative journalism is challenged by the declining revenues (e.g., in Australia, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Finland, Germany, Greece, Iceland, and Italy) coupled with a shrinking number of journalists working within newsrooms (e.g., in Canada). Financial strain and staff shortage detract journalists from conducting investigative reporting; on the other hand, investigative reporting seems to be prioritised by media organisations in a context where democratic, professional, and commercial values converge. Distinctive cases include the United Kingdom (Moore & Ramsay, 2021) and Canada (Taylor & DeCillia, 2021), where many news organisations' editors-in-chief maintain that they are committed to investigative journalism and, at the same time, acknowledge a lack of resources that makes it harder to produce quality journalism. Among the countries that seem to retain a commitment to investigative reporting are Sweden (Nord & von Krogh, 2021) and Denmark (Blach-Ørsten et al, 2021).

Overall, the MDM research findings reveal that investigative reporting – based on extensive procedures of conceiving ideas, in-depth research, and reporting results thoroughly – seems to be an exception rather than the rule. Nevertheless, in an era where fake news are gaining ground, and public trust in the media is in a state of flux, the watchdog function of journalism remains critical. Despite the challenging context, the 2021 MDM research project, as well as previous studies (e.g., Lanosga & Houston, 2017), show that there is still reason to be optimistic regarding the watchdog role of journalism.

The journalists interviewed in Sweden stood out as those that most strongly endorsed the independent scrutiny of powerholders, the collection and distribution of information to citizens aimed at informed decision-making, and giving voice to the voiceless within democracies (Nord & von Krogh, 2021). Other positive examples are initiatives implemented in countries where ad hoc resources for investigative reporting is preferred as an alternative to systematic resources (in Finland, Iceland, and the Netherlands) or where subsidies policy has been set in place (in Belgium and the Netherlands) with the aim of strengthening the investigative function of newsrooms and promoting journalistic projects of a special quality. Last, but not least, there are distinctive cases in Australia (Dwyer et al., 2021) and Finland (Ala-Fossi et al., 2021) where, although journalism-related research investments have been reduced, public service media undertake initiatives to promote investigative journalism.

Generally, the 2021 MDM research project reveals that the existence of investigative reporting is proportional to the financial strength that characterises

the media organisations at the national level, with targeted public subsidies – where applicable – proving efficient during times of economic recession.

Digitalisation of newsmaking, framed by disinformation, misinformation, and hyper-provision of news through social media, has induced opportunities as well as challenges for investigative reporting. The adoption of new digital tools for finding sources, analysing data, and disseminating news is indeed an asset (Hahn & Stalph, 2018). In this context, the watchdog function of journalism can continue to be carried out through an innovative and modified model of investigative journalism adapted to the digital age. This may entail large-scale synergies between media outlets and media platforms, crossing national borders and even including collaborations with non-media bodies. This adaptation process is further enhanced by the orientation of the media to data journalism and crowd-sourcing, with news workers placing emphasis on multimedia and digital engagement (Carson & Farhall, 2018).

Also, despite having been accused of giving rise to a type of sloppy or fake news production, new technologies have likely offered opportunities for evidence-based journalism (Carson & Farhall, 2018). Therefore, enhancing the investigative reporting capacity can be assumed to be a primary aspiration of journalists, and new technologies, based on artificial intelligence software systems, can add value to investigative reporting practices (Broussard, 2015) and improve news production efficiency (Newman, 2021).

It is advisable that sustainable investigative journalism be sought in alternative, but achievable, business models. Such is the case of the emerging digital investigative journalism non-profit start-ups, whose aim is to produce public interest journalism by means of support derived from subscribers, motivated mainly by their belief in the social and democratic benefits of investigative journalism (Price, 2020). Similarly, legacy media need to find alternative models of financing investigative reporting; otherwise, in many media markets, the watchdog role of journalists runs the risk of slowly disappearing.

Moreover, in 2020, the media sector was characterised by a favourable trend towards increasing subscription-based content, since publications based on a membership or subscription model proved more successful than those provided to the audience free of charge (Newman, 2021). The successful examples of American media outlets (such as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*), as well as European media outlets (*Helsingin Sanomat* in Finland, *Bild* in Germany, and local newspapers owned by Amedia in Norway), have been argued to have paved the way for other media organisations to seriously consider the transition to a subscription model (Newman, 2018). Based on these findings, it is likely that in the future, high-quality news reporting will increase subscriptions from audience members prepared to pay for independent and trustworthy journalism.

In view of these trends, the adaptability of the media industry to new particularities of the media market seems to be the only sustainable way forward

for investigative journalism, considering the backdrop of declining levels of this particular type of journalism in the leading news media. Acting as true watchdogs – rather than lapdogs – of power, journalists should not be content with sharing a general appraisal of investigative journalism, but should strive to implement this type of quality journalism in practice. Given that investment in quality investigative reporting has proved to be an efficient means of television stations' enhancing their audiences (Abdenour & Riffe, 2019), and meaningful watchdog reporting has been regarded by newspaper editors as a considerable motivator for the audience to buy newspapers (Knobel, 2018), this type of journalism is worth being part of the journalistic normality.

In theory, investigative journalism is exercised with the aim of serving the public interest (Goddard, 2006). In practice, its performance might not be successful or complete unless certain conditions are met; those are, apart from available resources, the existence of a journalistic culture free from undermining features such as clientelism. The importance of investigative journalism within a democratic system lies in its potential to increase political accountability, inform the citizenry, and encourage public dialogue by disclosing information to the public (Waisbord, 2002). This contribution is infeasible unless news organisations and journalists enjoy a working environment characterised by autonomy. Journalists must be free to conduct their reporting practices, based on an effective right to access public information, ensured by law. Another indispensable quality is the right to keep sources secret, safeguarding a journalist's credibility against their sources (Waisbord, 2002). Practising investigative journalism presupposes that news organisations be financially viable and independent from government subsidies or government advertising. They should also employ sufficient staff, part of which may be devoted to the task of investigative reporting, incorporating ample time for research and newsroom autonomy, features that permit journalists to produce quality news disclosures.

It is not sufficient for investigative journalism to be recognised as important by only the journalists; an established culture is needed, free from the bureaucratic routines or any other constraints that might affect the operation of the media organisations as a whole. Investigative reporting in the form of ad hoc special projects based on targeted funding and a team-building process – as implemented, for instance, in the Netherlands (Vandenberghe & d'Haenens, 2021) and Austria (Grünangerl et al., 2021) – may serve as an example for other countries. Moreover, the stable financial condition of the public service media sector can be perceived as a valuable asset for public broadcasters in times of crises, enabling them to play their role as servants of democracy through investigative news reporting. As for commercial media, given that investigative journalism is mainly undermined by the lack of financing and time in newsrooms, ad hoc resources – as implemented, for instance, in Iceland (Jóhannsdóttir et al., 2021) – may operate as a workable counterbalance.

Maybe a redefinition of investigative journalism unrelated to the traditional ideals with which it is being associated, but adapted to the requirements of digital times, would mitigate or reverse the weakness of some media organisations in conducting investigative journalism. After all, democracy and investigative journalism are mutually interdependent: Democracy is served by well-implemented investigative journalism, which incorporates the accountability role of watchdog news workers, while, at the same time, the proper functioning of democratic institutions is a prerequisite for journalists engaged in the demanding task of investigative reporting.

Note

1. Transparency remark: One of the authors, Torbjörn von Krogh, took an active part in this process as a reporter some 30 years ago.

References

- Abdenour, J., & Riffe, D. (2019). Digging for (ratings) gold: The connection between investigative journalism and audiences. *Journalism Studies*, 20(16), 2386–2403. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2019.1598887>
- Adibah, I., Mohd, K. A., & Che, S. M. (2014). Conceptualization of investigative journalism: The perspectives of Malaysian media practitioners. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 155, 165–170. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.10.274>
- Ala-Fossi, M., Grönvall, J., Karppinen, K., & Nieminen, H. (2021). Finland: Sustaining professional norms with fewer journalists and declining resources. In J. Trappel, & T. Tomaz (Eds.), *The Media for Democracy Monitor 2021: How leading news media survive digital transformation* (Vol. 1) (pp. 153–196). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855404-4>
- Aldridge, M., & Evetts, J. (2003). Rethinking the concept of professionalism: The case of journalism. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 54(4), 547–564. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-4446.2003.00547.x>
- Ali, W., & Hassoun, M. (2019). Artificial intelligence and automated journalism: Contemporary challenges and new opportunities. *International Journal of Media, Journalism and Mass Communications*, 5(1), 40–49. <https://doi.org/10.20431/2454-9479.0501004>
- Anderson, C., & Schudson, M. (2019). Objectivity, professionalism, and truth seeking. In K. Wahl-Jorgensen, & T. Hanzitsch (Eds.), *The handbook of journalism studies* (2nd ed.) (pp. 88–101). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315167497>
- Anderson, D., & Benjaminson, P. (1976). *Investigative reporting*. Indiana University Press.
- Bennett, L. W., & Serrin, W. (2005). The watchdog role. In G. Overholser, & K. H. Jamieson (Eds.), *The Press* (pp. 169–188). Oxford University Press.
- Berkowitz, D. (2007). Professional views, community news: Investigative reporting in small US dailies. *Journalism*, 8(5), 551–558. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884907081051>
- Bjerknes, F. (2020, November 16). Inventive factfinders: Investigative journalism as professional self-representation, marker of identity and boundary work. *Journalism Practice*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2020.1845780>
- Blach-Ørsten, M., Burkal, R., Mayerhöffer, E., & Willig, I. (2021). Denmark: High media independence and informal democratic traditions in the newsroom. In J. Trappel, & T. Tomaz (Eds.), *The Media for Democracy Monitor 2021: How leading news media survive digital transformation* (Vol. 2) (pp. 147–176). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855428-4>

- Bonfadelli, H., Meier, W. A., & Schanne, M. (2021). Switzerland: Highly concentrated leading news media in austerity and downsizing mode. In J. Trappel, & T. Tomaz (Eds.), *The Media for Democracy Monitor 2021: How leading news media survive digital transformation* (Vol. 1) (pp. 381–454). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855404-9>
- Broussard, M. (2015). Artificial intelligence for investigative reporting. *Digital Journalism*, 3(6), 814–831. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2014.985497>
- Carlson, M. (2015). The robotic reporter: Automated journalism and the redefinition of labor, compositional forms, and journalistic authority. *Digital Journalism*, 3(3), 416–431. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2014.976412>
- Carson, A. (2014). The political economy of the print media and the decline of corporate investigative journalism in Australia. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 49(4), 726–742. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10361146.2014.963025>
- Carson, A. (2019). *Investigative journalism, democracy and the digital age* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315514291>
- Carson, A., & Farhall, K. (2018). Understanding collaborative investigative journalism in a “post-truth” age. *Journalism Studies*, 19(13), 1899–1911. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2018.1494515>
- Chambers, D. (2000). *Critical approaches to the media: The changing context for investigative journalism*. Routledge.
- Coddington, M., & Lewis, S. (2020, December 4). *How journalists learned to stop worrying and love the audience*. RQ1. <https://rq1.substack.com/p/how-journalists-learned-to-stop-worrying>
- Coleman, R., & Wilkins, L. (2002). Searching for the ethical journalist: An exploratory study of the moral development of news workers. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 17(3), 209–225. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327728JMME1703_03
- Costera Meijer, I. (2020). Understanding the audience turn in journalism: From quality discourse to innovation discourse as anchoring practices 1995–2020. *Journalism Studies*, 21(16), 2326–2342. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2020.1847681>
- de Burgh, H. (Ed.). (2000). *Investigative journalism* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203360804>
- de Burgh, H. (2003). Kings without crowns? The re-emergence of investigative journalism in China. *Media, Culture & Society*, 25(6), 801–820. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443703256005>
- de Burgh, H. (2008). Forty years: A tradition of investigative journalism. In H. de Burgh (Ed.), *Investigative journalism* (2nd ed.) (pp. 54–69). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203895672>
- Dicken-Garcia, H. (1989). *Journalistic standards in nineteenth-century America*. The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Donsbach, W., & Patterson, T. E. (2004). Political news journalists. In F. Esser, & B. Pfetsch (Eds.), *Comparing political communication: Theories, cases, and challenges* (pp. 251–70). Cambridge University Press.
- Drüeke, R. (2018). Medien, Öffentlichkeit und Demokratie: Zur Watchdog-Funktion von Medien [Media, the public and democracy: On the watchdog function of the media]. *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen*, 31(3), 19–28. <https://doi.org/10.1515/fjsb-2018-0059>
- Drüeke, R., & Weber, K. (2016). Watchdog journalism. In D. J. Verband (Ed.), *Journalistische genres* (pp. 227–240). UVK.
- Dwyer, T., Wilding, D., & Koskie, T. (2021). Australia: Media concentration and deteriorating conditions for investigative journalism. In J. Trappel, & T. Tomaz (Eds.), *The Media for Democracy Monitor 2021: How leading news media survive digital transformation* (Vol. 1) (pp. 59–94). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855404-2>
- Eide, M. (2010). Dialogical ambiguities: Journalism, professionalism and flattery. *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook*, 8(1), 9–23. https://doi.org/10.1386/nl.8.9_1
- Ettema, J. S., & Glasser, L. T. (1988). Narrative form and moral force: The realization of innocence and guilt through investigative journalism. *Journal of Communication*, 38(3), 8–26.
- Ettema, J. S., & Glasser, L. T. (1998). *Custodians of conscience: Investigative journalism and public virtue*. Columbia University Press.
- Eurobarometer. (2020). *Media use in the European Union: Fieldwork November 2019* [Standard Eurobarometer 92: Autumn 2019]. The European Commission. <https://doi.org/10.2775/80086>

- Gerli, M., Mazzoni, M., & Mincigrucci, R. (2018). Constraints and limitations of investigative journalism in Hungary, Italy, Latvia and Romania. *European Journal of Communication*, 33(1), 22–36. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323117750672>
- GIJN (Global Investigative Journalism Network). (2020). *Membership in GIJN*. Retrieved November 24, 2020, from <https://gijn.org/membership-in-gijn/>
- Glasser, T., & Ettema, J. (1989). Investigative journalism and the moral order. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 6(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295038909366728>
- Goddard, P. (2006). “Improper liberties”: Regulating undercover journalism on ITV, 1967–1980. *Journalism*, 7(1), 45–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884906059427>
- Greene, R. (1983). Foreword. In J. Ullman, & S. Honeyman (Eds.), *The reporters handbook: An investigator's guide to documents and techniques* (pp. vii–xii). St. Martin's Press.
- Grünangerl, M., Trappel, J., & Tomaz, T. (2021). Austria: Confirmed democratic performance while slowly digitalising. In J. Trappel, & T. Tomaz (Eds.), *The Media for Democracy Monitor 2021: How leading news media survive digital transformation* (Vol. 1) (pp. 95–152). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855404-3>
- Hahn, O., & Stalph, F. (2018). Digital investigative journalism. In O. Hahn, & F. Stalph (Eds.), *Digital investigative journalism: Data, visual analytics and innovative methodologies in international reporting* (pp. 1–6). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing media systems: Three models of media and politics*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511790867>
- Hanitzsch, T., Hanusch, F., Mellado, C., Anikina, M., Berganza, R., Cangoz, I., Coman, M., Hamada, B., Hernández, M. E., Karadjov, C. D., Moreira, S. V., Mwesige, P. G., Plaisance, P. L., Reich, Z., Seethaler, J., Skewes, E. A., Noor, D. V., & Wang Yuen, E. K. (2011). Mapping journalism cultures across nations: A comparative study of 18 countries. *Journalism Studies*, 12(3), 273–293. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2010.512502>
- Horz-Ishak, C., & Thomass, B. (2021). Germany: Solid journalistic professionalism and strong public service media. In J. Trappel, & T. Tomaz (Eds.), *The Media for Democracy Monitor 2021: How leading news media survive digital transformation* (Vol. 1) (pp. 197–256). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855404-5>
- Houston, B. (2010). The future of investigative journalism. *Daedalus*, 139(2), 45–56. <https://doi.org/10.1162/daed.2010.139.2.45>
- Jurkowitz, M., & Mitchell, A. (2020, February 26). *Most say journalists should be watchdogs, but views of how well they fill this role vary by party, media diet*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.journalism.org/2020/02/26/most-say-journalists-should-be-watchdogs-but-views-of-how-well-they-fill-this-role-vary-by-party-media-diet/>
- Jóhannsdóttir, V., Ólafsson, J. G., & Guðmundsson, F. P. (2021). Iceland: A small media system facing increasing challenges. In J. Trappel, & T. Tomaz (Eds.), *The Media for Democracy Monitor 2021: How leading news media survive digital transformation* (Vol. 2) (pp. 275–314). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855428-7>
- Kim, W. B. (2003). Economic crisis, downsizing and “layoff survivor’s syndrome”. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 33, 449–464. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472330380000281>
- Knobel, B. (2018, 13 April). The end of investigative journalism? Not yet. *Columbia Journalism Review*. <https://www.cjr.org/analysis/news-papers-financial-crisis.php>
- Kurtz, H. (1994). *Media circus: The trouble with America's newspapers*. Three Rivers Press.
- Lanosga, G., & Houston, B. (2017). Spotlight: Journalists assess investigative reporting and its status in society. *Journalism Practice*, 11(9), 1101–1120. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2016.1228472>
- Lanosga, G., Willnat, L., Weaver, H. D., & Houston, B. (2017). A breed apart? A comparative study of investigative journalists and US journalists. *Journalism Studies*, 18(3), 265–287. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2015.1051570>
- Leigh, D. (2019). *Investigative journalism: A survival guide*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-16752-3>
- Li, K., & Sparks, C. (2018). Chinese newspapers and investigative reporting in the new media age. *Journalism Studies*, 19(3), 415–431. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2016.1192955>

- Lo, W. H., & Wong, T. C. (2021). Hong Kong: Free press under existential threat. In J. Trappel, & T. Tomaz (Eds.), *The Media for Democracy Monitor 2021: How leading news media survive digital transformation* (Vol. 2) (pp. 231–274). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855428-6>
- Malila, V. (2019). Beyond watchdog journalism: Media and social accountability in South Africa. *African Journalism Studies*, 40(1), 91–106. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2019.1621918>
- Marder, M. (1998). 1998: *This is watchdog journalism*. Nieman Foundation. <https://nieman.harvard.edu/articles/1998-this-is-watchdog-journalism/>
- Meyers, C., Wyatt, N. W., Borden, L. S., & Wasserman, E. (2012). Professionalism, not professionals. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 27(3), 189–205. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08900523.2012.700212>
- Moore, M. & Ramsay, G. (2021). United Kingdom: Economic challenges, market consolidation and increasing professional insecurity. In J. Trappel, & T. Tomaz (Eds.), *The Media for Democracy Monitor 2021: How leading news media survive digital transformation* (Vol. 1) (pp. 455–520). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855404-10>
- Munoriyarwa, A. (2018). Have they got news for us? The decline of investigative reporting in Zimbabwe's print media. *Communication*, 44(1), 71–88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02500167.2018.1441888>
- Newman, N. (2018). *Digital news project 2018: Journalism, media, and technology trends and predictions 2018*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/our-research/journalism-media-and-technology-trends-and-predictions-2018>
- Newman, N. (2021). *Digital news project January 2021: Journalism, media, and technology trends and predictions 2021*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/journalism-media-and-technology-trends-and-predictions-2021>
- Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Kueng, L., Nielsen, R. K., Selva, M., & Suárez, E. (2020a). *Digital news project January 2020: Journalism, media, and technology trends and predictions 2020*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford. <https://www.digitalnewsreport.org/publications/2020/journalism-media-and-technology-trends-and-predictions-2020/>
- Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Schulz, A., Andi, S., & Nielsen, R. K. (2020b). *Reuters Institute digital news report 2020*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford. <https://www.digitalnewsreport.org/survey/2020/>
- Newton, K. (1995). The mass media: Fourth estate or fifth column? In R. Pyper, & L. Robins (Eds.), *Governing the UK in the 1990s* (pp. 155–176). Palgrave. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-23899-6_8
- Nord, L. W. (2007). Investigative journalism in Sweden. *Journalism*, 8(5), 517–521. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884907081045>
- Nord, L., & von Krogh, T. (2021). Sweden: Continuity and change in a more fragmented media landscape. In J. Trappel, & T. Tomaz (Eds.), *The Media for Democracy Monitor 2021: How leading news media survive digital transformation* (Vol. 1) (pp. 353–380). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855404-8>
- Núñez-Mussa, E. (2021). Chile: Crisis of trust and a precarious industry. In J. Trappel, & T. Tomaz (Eds.), *The Media for Democracy Monitor 2021: How leading news media survive digital transformation* (Vol. 2) (pp. 85–146). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855428-3>
- Padovani, C., Bobba, G., Baroni, A., Belluati, M., Biancalana, C., Bomba, M., Fubini, A., Marrazzo, F., Rega, R., Ruggiero, C., Sallusti, S., Splendore, S., & Valente, M. (2021). Italy: A highly regulated system in search of equality. In J. Trappel, & T. Tomaz (Eds.), *The Media for Democracy Monitor 2021: How leading news media survive digital transformation* (Vol. 2) (pp. 315–386). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855428-8>
- Papathanassopoulos, S., Karadimitriou, A., Kostopoulos, C., & Archontaki, I. (2021). Greece: Media concentration and independent journalism between austerity and digital disruption. In J. Trappel, & T. Tomaz (Eds.), *The Media for Democracy Monitor 2021: How leading news media survive digital transformation* (Vol. 2) (pp. 177–230). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855428-5>

- Pinto, J. (2008). Muzzling the watchdog: The case of disappearing watchdog journalism from Argentine mainstream news. *Journalism*, 9(6), 750–774. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884908096244>
- Price, J. (2020). How to feed the ferret: Understanding subscribers in the search for a sustainable model of investigative journalism. *Journalism*, 21(9), 1320–1337. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884917733587>
- Proress, D. L., Cook, F. L., Doppelt, J. C., Ettema, J. S., Gordon, M. T., Leff, D. R., & Miller, P. (1991). *The journalism of outrage: Investigative reporting and agenda building in America*. Guilford Press.
- Reinardy, S. (2012). Job security, satisfaction, influence work commitment. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 33(1), 54–70. <https://doi.org/10.1177/073953291203300105>
- Saldaña, M., & Mourão, R. R. (2018). Reporting in Latin America: Issues and perspectives on investigative journalism in the region. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 23(3), 299–323. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161218782397>
- Schudson, M. (2008). *Why democracies need an unlovable press*. Polity Press.
- Squires, J. (1993). *Read all about it: The corporate takeover of America's newspapers*. Times Books.
- Stetka, V., & Örnebring, H. (2013). Investigative journalism in Central and Eastern Europe: Autonomy, business models, and democratic roles. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 18(4), 413–435. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161213495921>
- Stray, J. (2019). Making artificial intelligence work for investigative journalism. *Digital Journalism*, 7(8), 1076–1097. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2019.1630289>
- Suárez, E. (2020). *How to build a successful subscription news business: Lessons from Britain and Spain* [Reuters Institute Journalist Fellowship Paper]. University of Oxford. https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2020-02/Eduardo_Suarez_Digital_subscriptions_fellowship_paper.pdf
- Sørmo Strømme, E. (2020). Hva forteller SKUP-rapportene om norsk gravejournalistikk? [What does the SKUP-report tell us about investigative journalism in Norway?]. *Norsk Medietidskrift*, 107(2), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.18261/ISSN.0805-9535-2020-02-04>
- Taylor, G., & DeCillia, B. (2021). Canada: A strong foundation with an uncertain future. In J. Trappel, & T. Tomaz (Eds.), *The Media for Democracy Monitor 2021: How leading news media survive digital transformation* (Vol. 2) (pp. 43–84). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855428-2>
- Tong, J. (2011). *Investigative journalism in China: Journalism, power and society*. Continuum.
- Trappel, J., & Tomaz, T. (2021a). Democratic performance of news media: Dimensions and indicators for comparative studies. In J. Trappel, & T. Tomaz (Eds.), *The Media for Democracy Monitor 2021: How leading news media survive digital transformation* (Vol. 1) (pp. 11–58). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855404-1>
- Trappel, J., & Tomaz, T. (Eds.). (2021b). *The Media for Democracy Monitor 2021: How leading news media survive digital transformation* (Vol. 1). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855404>
- Trappel, J., & Tomaz, T. (Eds.). (2021c). *The Media for Democracy Monitor 2021: How leading news media survive digital transformation* (Vol. 2). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855428>
- Underwood, D. (1995). *When MBAs rule the newsroom*. Columbia University Press.
- Vandenbergh, H., & d'Haenens, L. (2021). The Netherlands: On media concentration and resilient freelance journalists. In J. Trappel, & T. Tomaz (Eds.), *The Media for Democracy Monitor 2021: How leading news media survive digital transformation* (Vol. 1) (pp. 257–296). Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. <https://doi.org/10.48335/9789188855404-6>
- van Eijk, D. (Ed.). (2005). *Investigative journalism in Europe*. Vereniging van Onderzoeksjournalisten [Association of Investigative Journalists], VVOJ.
- Veseling, B. (2020). *Webinar takeaways: How Dagens Nyheter has added thousands of digital subs during COVID-19*. Wan/Ifra – World Association of News Publishers. <https://wan-ifra.org/2020/04/webinar-takeaways-how-dagens-nyheter-has-added-thousands-of-digital-subs-during-covid-19/>
- Wahl-Jørgensen K., & Hanitzsch, T. (2008). *The handbook of journalism studies* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203877685>

- Wahl-Jorgensen, K., Williams, A., Sambrook, R., Harris, J., Garcia-Blanco, I., Dencik, L., Cushion, S., Carter, C., & Allan, S. (2016). The future of journalism: Risks, threats and opportunities. *Digital Journalism*, 4(7), 809–815. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2016.1199469>
- Waisbord, S. (2000). *Watchdog journalism in South America: News, accountability, and democracy*. Columbia University Press.
- Waisbord, S. (2002). *The challenges of investigative journalism* [56 U. Miami L. Rev. 377]. <https://repository.law.miami.edu/umlr/vol56/iss2/6>
- Wang, H. (2016). *The transformation of investigative journalism in China: From journalists to activists*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Weischenberg, S., Malik, M., & Scholl, A. (2006). Die Souffleure der Mediengesellschaft: Report über die Journalisten in Deutschland [The prompts of the media society: Report on the journalists in Germany]. UVK.
- Witschge, T., & Nygren, G. (2009). Journalistic work: A profession under pressure? *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 6(1), 37–59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16522354.2009.11073478>
- Wyss, V. (2012). Die Krise des professionellen Journalismus aus der Sicht des Qualitätsmanagements [The crisis of professional journalism from the perspective of quality management]. In W. A. Meier, H. Bonfadelli, & J. Trappel (Eds.), *Geben in den Leuchttürmen die Lichter aus? Was aus den Schweizer Leitmedien wird* [Do the lights go out in the lighthouses? What will become of the leading Swiss media] (pp. 255–276). LIT.
- Yusha'u, M. (2009). Investigative journalism and scandal reporting in the Nigerian press. *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies*, 30(2), 155–174. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02560054.2009.9653400>

Appendix 5.1

Table 5.1 Summary of key issues related to investigative journalism and newsroom's watchdog role

Country	Sufficient resources for investigative journalism ^a	Watchdog function specified in mission statements or policy documents	Negative economic pressures on investigative journalism and watchdog function	Ad hoc financing or team's establishment for watchdog function	Investigative journalism is part of public service media mission	Public service media actively support investigative journalism
Australia	✓	Part of journalists' self-perception	✓	n.a.	PSM organisations have an implicit obligation to provide IJ based on their respective charters (ABC charter, sub-section 6 (2)(a) (iii), 6(2)(b) & SBS charter). Both charters also claim an obligation of PSM to inform their audiences	PSB ABC has a special unit dedicated to IJ
Austria	n.a.	Part of journalists' self-definition	✓ Limited funds	Established task forces for IJ in several media. Ad hoc establishment of teams and financing of investigative reporting	PSB ORF operates a small but effective task force on IJ	PSB ORF is collaborating with other news media in investigative reporting
Belgium (Flanders)	n.a.	Part of journalists' self-perception	✓	Specific task forces on IJ only in some media organisations	✓	n.a.
Canada	n.a.	Integral part of journalists' identity & self-perception	✓	n.a.	CBC News is characterised by a long history of IJ, although investigative reporting is not specified in the PSB's legislated mandate	PSB CBC has a special investigative unit dedicated to IJ, which is an integral part of the news service
Chile	There are not enough resources for IJ and thus there is a system of outsourcing to production companies or freelancers	n.a.	✓	Decrease of specialised journalists devoted to the watchdog role	n.a.	n.a.
Denmark	✓	Part of journalists' self-perception	n.a.	Ad hoc resources (in addition to the fixed funding)	n.a.	PSBs DR and TV 2 have specific IJ groups

Table 5.1 Cont.

Country	Sufficient resources for investigative journalism	Watchdog function specified in mission statements or policy documents	Negative economic pressures on investigative journalism and watchdog function	Ad hoc financing or team's establishment for watchdog function	Investigative journalism is part of public service media mission	Public service media actively support investigative journalism
Finland	Fewer resources available compared to the past	✓ Part of the Guidelines of Journalists to which media professionals show obedience	✓	✓	PSB YLE is obliged to produce IJ (according to the law Article §7a), a duty which is carried out	✓ PSB YLE has specific investigative group
Germany	Fewer resources available compared to the past	n.a.	✓	Outsourcing to special units	n.a.	n.a.
Greece	Fewer resources available compared to the past	Part of journalists' self-perception	✓	✓	n.a.	IJ is set in practice occasionally by the PSB ERT
Hong Kong	✓	n.a.	✓	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Iceland	n.a.	Part of journalists' self-perception, at least in the national media	✓	✓	n.a.	✓ PSB RÚV has specific investigative group
Italy	n.a.	Not considered a priority in mission statements. Explicit reference in the service contract stipulated by PSB RAI	✓	n.a.	Typically specified in the Service Contract of the PSB RAI, but actually not set in place	IJ is not so widely applicable in the daily practice of the PSB RAI
Netherlands	✓ Since 2019, the Dutch government has ensured extra funds (5M annually for 5 years) earmarked for IJ. The Stimulation Fund for Journalism has spent yearly approx. 2.75M in the last 3 years (2019-2021) on projects aimed at strengthening the infrastructure for IJ	✓ Media decide if and to what extent watchdog role is part of the mission statement	"Economic pressures" (i.e., the collapse of the advertising market in the previous period may have influenced the willingness to spend money on IJ)	✓	Several PSB associations under the NPO umbrella have their own investigative editors: VPRO (Argo), KRO/NRCV (Pointer), and BNN/VARA (Zembla). IJ practice is an inseparable part of the PSB, although not explicitly described in the mission statement	n.a.

Table 5.1 Cont.

Country	Sufficient resources for investigative journalism ^a	Watchdog function specified in mission statements or policy documents	Negative economic pressures on investigative journalism and watchdog function	Ad hoc financing or team's establishment for watchdog function	Investigative journalism is part of public service media mission	Public service media actively support investigative journalism
Portugal	Fewer resources than expected (and required) by the newsroom	✓ Indirect references	✓	Specific (but small) teams devoted to IJ exist in some media organisations	n.a.	PSB RTP has specific teams focusing on IJ, although they are small ones
South Korea	n.a.	✓ Only some major media organisations specify financial support for IJ in code of ethics	✓ Decrease in foreign correspondents	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Sweden	✓ 10% of the editorial resources, as estimated by editors in leading media organisations	✓ Part of journalists' self-perception, at least in the national media	✓ Mainly in regional privately owned media organisations	✓ Established task forces or departments for IJ in national media organisations	✓ The watchdog function is implicit in the steering documents	✓ Very active in supporting and performing investigative reporting
Switzerland	Fewer resources available compared to the past	Part of journalistic self-image, but no distinct culture of IJ exists	✓	n.a.	✓	✓
United Kingdom	✓ True for broadcasters	✓ True for many newspapers	✓ In the commercial media sector, in the local and regional press	n.a.	In the BBC's constitutional documents, the watchdog function of journalism is implicitly defined	n.a.

Comments: PSM = public service media; PSB = public service broadcaster; IJ = investigative journalism; n.a. = not applicable.

^aSufficient resources for investigative journalism refer to cases of leading news media where a reasonable standard of investigative reporting is ensured.

Source: Trappel & Tomaz 2021b, 2021c

