

DIGITAL JOURNALISM

Special issue call for papers

UNFOLDING DISENTANGLEMENTS FROM PLATFORM POWER IN JOURNALISM: STRATEGIES, PERCEPTIONS, PRACTICES AND ALLIANCES

This special issue compiles new perspectives on disentanglements from platform power in journalism. The special issue focuses on strategic forms of resistance, perceptions, practices, and alliances that enable or result in disentanglements of asymmetric power and dependencies from platforms in journalism. Here, we refer to a broad take on digital platforms, including social media, search engines, content aggregators and AI-generating platforms such as ChatGPT.

In the last decade, researchers have investigated the rise of platform power within the field of journalism (e.g., Hermida, 2010; Beláir-Gagnon, 2015; Helberger, 2020; Nielsen & Ganter, 2018, 2022). The dissection of platform power in this context has since evolved around the conceptualization and empirical studies on platform asymmetries (Ihlebaek & Sundet, 2021; Nielsen & Ganter, 2018; 2022; Poell et al., 2022), platform capture (Usher, 2021) and platform dependencies (Meese & Hurcombe, 2021; Pyo, 2022). Much of this work has benefited from the interdisciplinary field of platform studies and its insights into practices, economics, infrastructures and functionalities of digital platforms (e.g. Plantin et al., 2016; Van Dijck et al., 2018). Concepts such as “platform publishing” and “platformed publishing” (Nielsen & Ganter, 2022, p. 87) point to often unintended consequences of platform power and the varying extent to which media organizations depend on platforms for their content to be discovered and distributed and social media strategies they develop in this respect (Sehl et al., 2021). However, to fully understand these tendencies, attempts to disentangle – or to remain independent from platform power need to be conceptually included and studied.

Therefore, further empirical and conceptual work is urgently needed to understand better and theorize disentanglement, its impact over time,

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its dimensions, and the consequences of the varied responses across contexts. Some scholarly works have examined attempts to discipline, control or regulate platforms (Bossio et al., 2022; Ganter, 2022). Less studied is what Chua & Westlund (2019, 2022) have identified as "platform counterbalancing," a technique they observed news organizations in Singapore used to confront existing asymmetries with the platforms. They describe platform counterbalancing as reducing dependence on platforms non-proprietary to them (Chua & Westlund, 2022). We need to build on the scarce existing work to study further emerging counter-power initiatives in journalism, successful or unsuccessful disentanglements from platform power, strategies, innovations and alliances, practices and consequences. With this special issue, we want to create a space for analyzing the probabilities, processes, strategies, challenges and affordances that come with working towards reducing dependence on platforms. As such, we consider the following topics:

- Organizational case studies on both editorial and business-related journalistic projects that aim to disentangle from platform power
- Successful or unsuccessful government, citizen and or industry-led initiatives that enable or restrain counter-power initiatives to platform power in journalism
- Studies that contribute to understanding shifts in power dynamics between digital platforms and journalism by explaining emerging disentanglements from the perspectives of media organizations, journalists and policy-makers
- Studies focusing on journalists' practices, engagements with alternative tools, artifacts and new arrangements that potentially foster disentanglements from digital platforms
- Analysis and reflections of journalistic projects that have never been entangled with digital platforms in the first place and continue to maintain their independence
- Comparisons of different approaches to delimit platform power in the media sector on organizational- and policy levels
- Comparative approaches of strategies, perceptions, practices and alliances across different media types and national contexts (e.g. PSM vs. Private Sector Media)
- Studies on press subsidies (built outside of platforms' contributions) that focus on their impacts on enabling disentanglements of platformed journalism

INFORMATION ABOUT SUBMITTING

Proposals should include an abstract of 500-750 words (not including references) and a title page with background information on the author(s), including an abbreviated bio that describes previous and current research related to the special issue theme. Please submit your abstract as one file (PDF) with your name(s) clearly stated in the file name and on the title page. Use the special issue title as a header in the email. Send your proposal to **Dr. Sarah Anne Ganter** at sganter@sfu.ca by **February 5, 2024**.

Authors of accepted proposals are expected to develop and submit their original article for double-blind peer review, following the journal's peer-review procedure, by the deadline stated. Articles should be between 7,000 and 9,000 words (including references) and follow *Digital Journalism's* style guidelines.



- Studies refining the understanding of independence from platform power versus previous forms of independent journalism (independence from state or economic power)
- Technological developments, innovations and emerging infrastructures that create a potential for independencies from digital platforms and delimit platform power in journalism
- Other players, such as new emerging or alternative platforms or independent third parties and their services that provide tools in the competition to digital platforms and new, alternative services used by journalists and media organizations
- Theoretical reflections and contributions which conceptually enrich the ideas of disentangling platform power, counterbalancing and establishing counter-power in journalism
- Perspectives drawing from platform studies and focusing on affordances and constraints of disentanglements from platform power in journalism
- Consequences of disentanglements from platform power for journalism over time (e.g. consequences for relations between journalism, news organizations and audiences)

We particularly encourage submissions that study underrepresented and understudied contexts and by scholars from/based in non-western contexts. ■

TIMELINE

Abstract submission deadline:

February 5, 2024

Notification on submitted abstracts:

March 1, 2024

Article submission deadline:

August 19, 2024

Sarah Anne Ganter

Sarah Anne Ganter is Associate Professor in the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University, Associated Researcher at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford, and associated faculty member at the Digital Democracies Institute at Simon Fraser University. She is an expert in the areas of media governance and media policy in the digital era, content industries, comparative and cross-border research. Her expertise includes analyzing media and digital (policy) transformations from a theoretical perspective that focuses on the dynamics and interactions shaping institutional fields. She is the co-author of "The Power of Platforms: Shaping Media and Society" (2022, OUP) and the co-editor of "Media Governance: A Cosmopolitan Critique" (2022, Palgrave Macmillan).

Karoline Andrea Ihlebæk

Karoline Andrea Ihlebæk, PhD, is professor of journalism at Oslo Metropolitan University. She is part of the Digital Journalism Research Group, and currently co-leading the research project "Far-Right Politics Online" funded by the Norwegian Research Council. Her research interests include journalism and its boundaries, media criticism, platforms, and regulation. Ihlebæk's work is published in international journals like *New Media & Society*, *Digital Journalism*, *Journalism*, *Journalism Studies*, *Journalism Practice*, *European Journal of Communication*, and *Media Culture & Society*. Ihlebæk is an expert on alternative media and recently served as a co-editor on two special issues on alternative media as challengers to the 'mainstream media' in *Digital Journalism* (issue 8 2022 and issue 5 2023).

Annika Sehl

Annika Sehl is Chair and Professor of Journalism with a Focus on Media Structures and Society at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt. She is also a Research Associate of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford. Previously, she was Professor of Digital Journalism at the University of the Bundeswehr Munich. She was an Associate Researcher at the Weizenbaum Institute for the Networked Society, Berlin, and a Visiting Scholar at the Department of Communication Studies at Northwestern University. Annika Sehl is Chair of the Journalism Studies Division of the International Communication Association (ICA). Her research focuses on how digital change has affected news organizations, especially public service media, news production, and news use. She often chooses an international comparative perspective. Her research has been published in books, book chapters, and journals such as *Digital Journalism*, *European Journal of Communication*, *International Communication Gazette*, *Journalism*, *Journalism Studies*, *Mass Communication and Society*, *Media and Communication*, and *Social Media+ Society*.

SPECIAL ISSUE EDITORS' BIOS

JOURNAL'S RANKINGS

JCR (SSCI)

2022 Two-year impact factor = 5.4
2022 Five-year impact factor = 6.4
Q1 - Ranks 11 in Communication

Scopus

2022 CiteScore = 11.4
Q1 - Ranks 8 in Communication

SCImago Journal Rank

2022 SJR = 2.634
Q1 - Ranks 4 in Communication

Google Scholar

2018-2022 h5-index = 64
Ranks 3 in Communication
Ranks 1 in Humanities, Literature & Arts

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