



Call for papers for a special issue of *Digital Journalism*:

# Data journalism research Studying a maturing field

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THE RISE OF POST-FACTUAL politics has made data journalism, the journalistic collection, analysis, curation and publication of data (Coddington, 2015), more relevant than ever. Technological innovations, such as automation and bots, have led to the spread and diversification of data journalism, which is increasingly applied beyond elite news organizations. Recent projects like the Panama Papers have been described as data journalism at its best, while other examples of data journalism recently have come under criticism, for example when election forecasts by Nate Silver's *FiveThirtyEight* or *The New York Times*' *The Upshot* did not predict the success of Donald Trump. Nevertheless, the move to more interactive forms of data visualization have struck a chord with an increasingly active audience, and the inclusion of a chapter on Data Journalism in the 2017 edition of the AP style book can be seen as a final sign that this field of journalism is maturing.

At the same time as data journalism is maturing, scholarly interest in this field has grown as well. The special issue *Journalism in an Era of Big Data* (2015), edited by Seth Lewis, was a pioneering special issue, published in a moment of experimentation. Scholars reflected on how the abundance of data affected the news, and highlighted computation and quantification in newsrooms in relation to how new practices and roles may impact norms, routines and ethics. It was the starting point for a growth of data journalism studies where the majority of the studies consisted of national and institutional case studies, and where the focus in particular was on knowledge production in newsrooms, often of the elite media and predominantly from the United States, United Kingdom, Germany and the Nordic countries.

The early studies on data journalism identified and described the emerging practice of data journalism in newsrooms in the Western hemisphere, but few took a comparative perspective or studied data journalism in other parts of the world. Furthermore, while the evolving practice of data journalism has been subject to predominately exploratory research (e.g. Aussenhoffer, 2017) or taken a future-oriented approach with focus on the poten-

tial and novelty of data journalism (Anderson, 2012), the growing body of research on data journalistic practices has yet to find explanations for how data journalists are adapting journalistic versions of computational methods to more traditional journalistic practice. As the practice has matured, there is now potential for scholarly research to evaluate and critique the move toward quantification in newsrooms, assessing if and where data journalism has been helpful for the development of the journalism practice. Since audience research into data journalism is notably absent, we still know little about the way the public uses, appreciates and learns from different forms of data journalism. In addition, because recent studies on data journalism have found that audience feedback and advanced interactive features have potential, but are still sparsely used in data journalism (Loosen et al. 2017; Usher, 2016), it is important to find explanations for why the audience is treated primarily as an imagined audience where reciprocal interaction is not yet taking place.

THIS SPECIAL ISSUE of *Digital Journalism* welcomes submissions, which broaden the theoretical, empirical and geographic perspective on data journalism as one particular form of digital journalism. Theoretically, since data journalism practices involve a convergence of disciplines, cross-disciplinary approaches can fruitfully combine insight from journalism theory with insight from fields such as data science, interaction design, or cognition studies. Empirically, there is a need for more reception studies; content analyses of different data journalism genres; news production studies focusing on smaller news organizations or cross-national collaborations, and case studies of criticized data journalism projects. Geographically, there is a lack of systematic comparative research and of studies mapping how data journalism is practiced in regions like Africa, Asia, and Russia where data journalists might face data scarcity or state control over information.

This special issue welcomes computational, qualitative and quantitative research on data journalism as well as conceptual papers from all theoretical perspectives. Topics may include, but are not limited to research on:

- the way audiences use, evaluate and learn from different forms of data journalism, including data visualization and interactive data journalism,
- the impact of computational logics, artificial intelligence, intelligence augmentation and automation on data journalism practices,
- novel forms of finding, combining, creating and evaluating data for journalistic purposes,
- the sustainability of data journalism beyond legacy organizations, such as hyperlocal data journalism or data journalism involving other institutions, for example in terms of access to open data and the use of freedom of information legislation,
- the history and development of data journalism from a comparative perspective and beyond the Western world.

## Information about submission:

Proposals should include the following: an abstract of 500-750 words (not including references) as well as background information on the author(s), including an abbreviated bio that describes previous and current research that relates to the special issue theme. Please submit your proposal as one file (PDF) with your names clearly stated in the file name and the first page. Send your proposal to the e-mail address [ester.appelgren@sh.se](mailto:ester.appelgren@sh.se), [avd@sam.sdu.dk](mailto:avd@sam.sdu.dk) and [carlgustavl@gmail.com](mailto:carlgustavl@gmail.com) by the date stated in timeline below. Authors of accepted proposals are expected to develop and submit their original article, for full blind review, in accordance with the journal's peer-review procedure, by the deadline stated. Articles should be between 6500 and 7000 words in length. Guidelines for manuscripts can be found [here](#).

## TIMELINE:

Abstract submission deadline: **April 6, 2018**  
Notification on submitted abstracts: **April 20, 2018**  
Article submission deadline: **September 7, 2018**