

CLAUDIA MELLADO (ED.) (2020), BEYOND JOURNALISTIC NORMS. ROLE PERFORMANCE AND NEWS IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE. NEW YORK: ROUTLEDGE, 320 PP., ISBN: 9781138388499.

The book is the result of an international project entitled *Journalistic Role Performance* conducted between 2013 and 2018, across 18 countries worldwide. Claudia Mellado, Professor of Journalism at the School of Journalism of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, in Chile started to work on the project by doing research focused on her native country. Soon the potential of this innovative approach was recognized by communication scholars interested in journalism studies. Claudia Mellado's capacity to build a global experts forum around the idea of exploring the role of journalists between normative vision and actual practice has to be acknowledged. An outstanding international group of scholars from Western and Eastern Europe, from Asia, from North-America and Latin America contributed to the study that led to this book. The inclusiveness and the diversity-driven perspective of the book is also reflected in the authorship of the chapters that included both well-known scholars from the field of communication science and early-stage researchers.

In his foreword to this book, Silvio Waisbord underlined the perspective of the book as a positive example of "thinking together across multiple borders" (Mellado, 2020, p. XVII) and thus the research gap that the book is addressing. This is not a study in the field of journalism "in abstract", but a study that focuses on the practice of journalism. Existing comparative research has focused more on seeking typologies (e.g., Hanitzsch et al., 2011; Hanitzsch, Hanusch, Ramaprasad & de Beer, 2019) that have rather heuristic values and often practices that do not fit in the existing categories. As mentioned above, the strength of the current approach lies in looking for a common ground to study the current significance of professional roles in everyday journalistic practice. Claudia Mellado and her team embraced a de-westernized perspective (Waisbord & Mellado, 2014) of journalistic norms, not only throughout the theoretical view, but also by choosing an inclusive and more heterogeneous sample of countries based on Hallin and Mancini's (2004; 2012) Liberal, Democratic Corporatist, and Polarized Pluralist system models, and on the Democracy and Freedom of the Press Indices. Even with this type of sample, the book does not focus only on categorizing norms and practices based on nationality and region.

A cross-national comparative design using the mixed method was conducted in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, Cuba, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Ireland, Malaysia, Mexico, the Philippines, Poland, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, and the United States. First, content analysis was conducted on over 30,000 news stories from 64 print media outlets from the above-mentioned countries. The content analysis aimed to reveal how journalistic roles are reflected in the final news outcomes. The research of journalistic role in the relationship with news outcomes is a new approach that was first used only one decade ago. Second, a survey focusing on the current significance of the journalistic roles in everyday practice was applied to journalists that authored the analyzed news. By using this tool, the authors of the chapters of the present book are in line with other studies that addressed journalistic roles (Hanitzsch et al., 2011, 2019; Weaver & Willnat, 2012). Third, data on organizational, societal, political and economic aspects from the selected countries were collected and introduced into the analysis.

As a result of the *Journalistic Role Performance* Project, the first book focusing on the theoretical framework was published before the present book (Mellado, Hellmueller & Donsbach, 2017). The theoretical rationale previously developed was applied in the present volume and is grounded in the assumption that journalistic roles are based on journalistic voices, on the relationship between journalists and power holders, and the relationship between journalism and audiences. The book addresses six of the most common roles that are related to journalistic voices (the interventionist role), to the relationship with power holders (the watchdog, and the loyal facilitator), and the relationship with their audiences (the infotainment role, the service and the civic role) and their hybrid forms. The structure of the book consist of three parts and twelve chapters is in line. In the first part, entitled *Professional Roles and Journalistic Performance*, the book editor introduces the readers to the project development and presents the theoretical background of the study. Furthermore, the cross-national comparative design and methodology together with some of the results of the study are presented. The second part of the book is dedicated to the results of the empirical analysis. Chapter 4 addresses the way professional roles are reflected in the news content across the 18 countries analyzed. The ensuing chapters follow the theoretical structure. Thus, chapter 5 is dedicated to the journalistic voice, reflected by the performance of the interventionist role. Chapter 6 is dedicated to the power relations reflected by the performance of the watchdog and loyal-facilitator roles. Finally, in chapter 7 the audience approach is addressed, with the performance of the civic, infotainment, and service roles.

The third part of the book started with chapter 8 dedicated to the link between professional role conceptions, perceived role enactment, and journalistic role performance across countries that is empirically measured. Chapter 9 presented the analysis of role perception at the story-level, chapter 10 at the organizational

level and finally, chapter 11 at the society level. With the third part of the book, the analysis is moved to the organizational level (chapter 10), and the society-level approach (chapter 11), following the presentation of the story-level approach in chapter 9. Chapter 12 is the final chapter, and includes conclusions but also the challenges that the project has faced, while also presenting its limitations in an honest manner.

The results of the cross-country study showed that journalistic role performances, which are influenced by historical developments and by the transformation of the news-making processes, vary across and within countries and proved the existence of a multilayered hybridization of journalistic cultures. In some countries like the United States and Argentina, accompanied by Poland, Hungary, and Russia, the interventionist role was prevalent. Also, the watchdog role was identified in Poland, Spain, and Greece, while it was not present in China, Hong Kong, Cuba, Chile, and Switzerland. The loyal facilitator role was widespread in Cuba, and less so in Malaysia. The civic role was identified in the United States and Greece, and to a distinct lesser extent by Russia, Mexico, Cuba, Argentina, and Malaysia. The infotainment role was mostly present in Poland, Germany, Argentina, Chile, and Malaysia, and finally, the service role was present in the Eastern European countries in the sample, and the Philippines.

The findings are, to a certain extent, in line with previous research in the field of journalistic roles in the sense that the disseminative stance of journalists dominates compared to the interventionist stance, that journalism is more fact-based than opinion-based, regardless of the country (Hanitzsch et al., 2011, 2019; Weaver & Willnat, 2012). No evidence was found for the traditional media system grouping in the sense that differences and similarities across countries cannot always be explained by belonging to Western or non-Western regions. According to the findings of the study, journalistic cultures are based on a combination of role performances.

Beyond Journalistic Norms. Role Performance and News in a Comparative Perspective is an excellent example of embracing diversity and successfully working internationally even without substantial transnational project funding. The book is valuable both for the strong theoretical background and for the complex methodological approach. It proved to be an excellent example of a rigorous approach in communication science that can be followed by both young and experienced scholars. The analysis that was developed on several levels, including journalistic outcomes, the opinions, the attitudes, and the reported behavior of journalists, combined with organizational, economic, and societal variables draws a complex picture of journalistic roles. Especially for countries such as Poland or Hungary, referred to in the book as Eastern European, this approach seems to be more appropriate than a survey-based study.

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