

# AI, NEWS, AND THE STATE



REINSTITUTIONALISING JOURNALISM  
IN GLOBAL CHINA'S ALGORITHMIC AGE

JOANNE KUAI



# AI, News, and the State

Reinstitutionalising Journalism  
in Global China's Algorithmic Age

Joanne Kuai

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

---

Media and Communication Studies

---

DOCTORAL THESIS | Karlstad University Studies | 2025:21

---

# AI, News, and the State

Reinstitutionalising Journalism  
in Global China's Algorithmic Age

Joanne Kuai

AI, News, and the State - Reinstitutionalising Journalism  
in Global China's Algorithmic Age

---

Joanne Kuai

---

DOCTORAL THESIS

---

Karlstad University Studies | 2025:21

---

urn:nbn:se:kau:diva-103985

---

ISSN 1403-8099

---

ISBN 978-91-7867-574-6 (print)

---

ISBN 978-91-7867-575-3 (pdf)

---

<https://doi.org/10.59217/vtdx3630>

---

© The author

---

Distribution:

Karlstad University

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Department of Geography, Media and Communication

SE-651 88 Karlstad, Sweden

+46 54 700 10 00

---

Print: Universitetstryckeriet, Karlstad 2025

---

*To my parents, Luo Xiaobo and Kuai Dafu*



## Acknowledgements

---

I must admit I entered academia with an unrealistically romanticised idea of it and was, frankly, surprised by the harsh realities during the early years. But I have been fortunate—immensely so—to have met wonderful people who supported this journey, made it bearable, and even, at times, joyful. They gave me hope and inspired me to stay, to care, and to contribute to a healthier, inclusive, and more forward-looking community of knowledge production.

My deepest gratitude goes to my main supervisor, Michael Karlsson. When we first met over Zoom during the pandemic, and I was hesitating about moving to the northernmost place I had ever lived, you told me, “You come here, and we’ll train you to be the academic you want to be.” Throughout my years in Karlstad, you and my colleagues delivered on that promise. You guided me intellectually and taught me to be an academic with empathy, integrity, and sustained curiosity. Thank you for your patience, trust, and uncanny mastery of the perfectly timed emojis—and for showing me, time and again, how to think critically and act kindly in this profession. Working with you has been a privilege, a pleasure, and a lot of fun. I cannot thank you enough.

I am also deeply grateful to my co-supervisors, Elizabeth Van Couvering and John Lynch. I have often said: I have confidence in my PhD project because I have confidence in my supervisors. I thank Bingchun Meng and Anne Kaun, who served as my halfway and final seminar discussants, respectively, for their valuable feedback and thoughtful guidance. I also thank Cornelia Brantner for her generous feedback on multiple drafts, and for being an exceptional mentor, collaborator, colleague, and friend—and I am deeply grateful for your presence in both my academic and personal life.

I am grateful to the co-authors and collaborators I’ve had the privilege to work with—Raul Ferrer-Conill, Xiaolu Ji, Bibo Lin, Seth C. Lewis, and Rodrigo Zamith. Working with you has been both intellectually rewarding and genuinely enjoyable. Raul, thank you for being a brilliant scholar and an even better friend—you and Leah made me feel at home when I first moved to Sweden, and I miss having you around.

To the editors and guest editors who supported my work and offered guidance beyond the publications themselves—thank you: Oscar Westlund, Steve Jones, Bonnie Brennen, Natali Helberger, Jannie Møller Hartley, Claudia Mellado, Christian Katzenbach, Christian Pentzold, Tomás Dodds, and their colleagues. Your generosity and encouragement have meant a great deal. I also extend my thanks to the editorial and production teams at these journals, whose behind-the-scenes work made each publication possible.

I'd also like to thank Elisabeth Wennö for proofreading, Elizabeth Lindström for help with layout, Rickard Fallqvist at the Printing Office, and Inga-Lill Nilsson and Magnus Åberg at the KAU Library for their practical support. Special thanks go to Åsa Nilsson for the administrative support throughout the dissertation and my PhD journey—you're simply the best.

For projects beyond this dissertation, I am thankful to Laura Pranteddu, Colin Porlezza, Tomo Komatsu, Luling Huang, Salvatore Romano, David Cheruiyot, Helle Sjøvaag, Joan R. Rodriguez-Amat, and Xueying Wang for the chance to collaborate. I thank Fabian Ferrari for inviting me to co-guest-edit, and Dan Mercea for your trust and continued support. I have learned a great deal from working with you.

At the Department of Geography, Media and Communication (GMK) at Karlstad University (KAU), I have been surrounded by a collegial and supportive environment. Thank you to Mats Nilsson, Lotta Braunerhielm, Linda Ryan Bengtsson, and Christer Clerwall for your leadership; to Åsa Nilsson, Ellinor Klockare, Elisabeth Hall, and John Ivan for being there whenever I needed support; and to the many current and former colleagues whose guidance and friendship I've cherished: Henrik Örnebring, Karin Fast, André Jansson, Georgia Aitaki, Vladimir Cotal San Martin, Doris Posch, Richard Ek, Lena Grip, Christian Ritter, Håkan Liljegren, Sol Agin, Per Göransson, Jessica Edlom, Christos Kostopoulos, Ulrika Åkerlund, Moa Tunström, Laila Gibson, Anna Sjöberg, Nina Christenson, Emilia Ljungberg, Kajsa Carlsson, Maud Bernisson, Marju Himma-Kadakas among others—I'll always remember our world-class fika.

To my fellow GMK PhD mates—Carina Tenor, Svetlana Chuikina, Else Mikkelsen Båge, Henrik Bergius, Peter van Eerbeek, Sofia Billebo, Linnea Saltin, Ali Shah Syed Zulfiqar, Mariana Gomes,



Trang-Nhung Pham, and Darejan Tsurtsumia—thank you for your companionship through the ups and downs of this journey.

I'm a proud member of the Ander Centre for Research on News and Opinion in the Digital Era (NODE) and the Centre for Geomedia Studies. Thank you for providing such intellectually vibrant and supportive environments and for the opportunities to receive feedback from Rowan Wilken, Jason Dittmer, Stijn Reijnders, Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, and Nick Couldry during their research visits. I'm also grateful to the Anne-Marie och Gustaf Anders Stiftelse för mediaforskning for supporting my PhD financially.

At Karlstad University, I also want to thank my colleagues from the Graduate Student Association (GSA), especially Josefin Velander, Michaela Padden, Divya Anna Stephen, Mozghan Hashemzahi, Phil Aupke, Kristin Mikalsen, Åsa Melin, and Amal Nammouchi—thank you for the work we've done together to support PhD students' rights and wellbeing. I also want to thank the other support units at KAU: Isa Ed and Fredrik Kessler from HR; Åsa Möller, Roald McManus, and Lina Sandström from the Library; Erika Hellekant Rowe, Jonathan Strandlund, and Jonas Brefält from the Communications Office; James Lees and Éamonn McCallion from the Grant and Innovation Office (GIO); Nina Kusche at the International Office; and all the other colleagues who have been essential and so helpful whenever I needed them. Thank Jörg Pareigis and his colleagues at the Centre for Teaching and Learning (UPE) for the pedagogical training I received from Mikael Svanberg, Wibke Straube, Leonardo Martucci, Matthias Beckerle, and others. To the students I've had the pleasure to teach—your curiosity and kind words meant more than you know. To the friends and colleagues who brought warmth and light to life in this little Swedish town—thank you.

Beyond Karlstad, I've benefited from the broader Swedish academic community, particularly through the Train Network, the Journalism-Oriented PhD Scholars Network (JOPS), the Swedish Association for Media and Communication Research (FSMK), and courses and seminars at Södertörn, Gothenburg, Linköping, Örebro, Uppsala, Umeå, Mid Sweden, Stockholm, and Malmö Universities. I appreciate the guidance and support I've received from Pille Pruulmann Vengerfeldt, Göran Bolin, Andreas Mattsson, Kristina Riegert, Ester Appelgren, Sanna Volny, Miriana Cascone, Yanti

Sastrawan, Anna Roosvall, Magnus Fredriksson, Axel Vikström, Sandra Bergman, Margareta Melin, Cheryl Fung, Jenny Sundén, Pedro Camelo, Satenik Sargsyan, Francesca Morini, Saga Hansen, Claudia Di Matteo, Liming Liu, and Sherwin Chua, among others. I also thank FSMK for supporting doctoral student participation at conferences.

My perspectives were broadened through affiliations with the Graduate School in Asian Studies at Lund University, the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS), and the Chinese Journalism Research Network (CJRN), as well as through conversations with many talented colleagues researching Asia. Among those I'm thankful for are Marina Svensson, Florian Schneider, Elaine Yuan, Jun Liu, Kecheng Fang, Haiyan Wang, Duncan McCargo, Petra Desatova, Inga-Lill Blomkvist, Junhua Zhu, Hong Yu Liu, Amanda Brødsgaard, Wei Zhu, Gabriele de Seta, Carwyn Morris, Naja Morell Hjortshøj, Jesper Willaing Zeuthen, Chuncheng Liu, Rogier Creemers, Gianluigi Negro, Tabita Rosendal Ebbesen, Elizabeth Rhoads, Astrid Norén-Nilsson, Nicholas Loubere, Hanna Sahlberg, Ann-Marie Kellner, Nina Brand, Karin Zackari, Jinyan Zeng, Gina Song Lopez, Ning Ao, Julia Olsson, Kimhean Hok, Benjamin Davies, Xiaoting Yu, and Chontida Auikool.

I've learned so much from peers researching media and technology through the Augmented Journalism Network, News Automation Network, Nordic AI Journalism Network, Junior Scholars Network on AI, Media and Democracy, and the Nordic Network for Communication Infrastructure Research—as well as during the research sprints at the Alexander von Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society (HIIG) in Berlin and the Digital Methods Summer School in Amsterdam. My thanks to Anna Schjøtt Hansen, Hannes Cools, Max van Drunen, Carl-Gustav Lindén, Nadja Schaetz, Samuel Danzon-Chambaud, Agnes Stenbom, Olle Zachrison, Sejin Paik, Hanna Tuulonen, Mariëlle Wijermars, Stefanie Sirén-Heikel, Laurence Dierickx, David Caswell, Nick Diakopoulos, Andrea Guzman, José van Dijck, Felix Simon, Chico Camargo, Andreas Marckmann Andreassen, Claudio Agosti, Yingwen Wang, Ruoqian Li, among others.

International academic networks—including NordMedia, ECREA, IAMCR, ICA, AEJMC, and AoIR—have provided vital spaces for feedback, dialogue, and encouragement. I especially thank the Journalism Studies and Communication Law and Policy Divisions at ICA, and the organisers and participants of the 2022 ECREA Summer

School at the University of Cádiz, Spain. I want to acknowledge the guidance and support of Edson Tandoc, Mathias-Felipe de-Lima-Santos, Margareta Salonen, Joy Kibarabara, Matt Carlson, Joshua Braun, Alfred Hermida, Carlos Scolari, Neil Thurman, Taina Bucher, Valérie Bélair-Gagnon, Charis Papaevangelou, Lukas Mozdeika, Martina Pina, Kim Christian Schrøder, Philip Napoli, Aram Sinnreich, Alberto Lusoli, Daniela Dimitrova, Adi Kuntsman, and Guobin Yang.

I also deeply appreciated the company and solidarity of the China Media and Culture ECR Network. Thank you, Qian Huang, Zhen Ye, Erika Wang, Jing Zeng, Shenglan Qing, Shangwei Wu, Xiaoyu Zhang, Kaixin Cheng, Kun He, Jiayi Hou, Jiawei Ding, Zesheng Yang, and Iris Zhang. I began my PhD during the pandemic, working from home, and it was our Sunday Zoom meetings that powered me through and made me feel part of a real academic community.

I've had the privilege of presenting my research at places such as the AI Hype Working Group at the BKC at Harvard University, ADM+S at RMIT University, SMIT at Vrije Universiteit Brussel, and JourDem at Roskilde University. I thank the hosts and all participating colleagues for their generous feedback—especially James Meese, Haiqing Yu, Dongxiao Li, Aske Kammer, and Leif Hemming Pedersen. To my guest lecture hosts across Europe, Hong Kong, Macau, and mainland China—including Erika Wang, Vincent Huang, Angela Wang, Haiyan Wang, Ivy Zhang, Vikrant Kishore, Miao Huang, Fuxi Wang, Hui Li, Xianwen Kuang, Tingting Hu, and Xiaohong Wang—thank you for your warm invitations and enriching exchanges.

I am also grateful for the opportunity to engage with practitioners and the broader public through JournalismAI at Polis LSE, the Lisbon Forum, the Nordic Asia Podcast, New Books Network, Sixth Tone, and others. These experiences have enriched my research and helped extend its relevance beyond academia. I thank the colleagues at these platforms, especially Charlie Beckett, Tshepo Tshabalala, Lakshmi Sivadas, Mattia Peretti, Sabrina Argoub, Julie Yu-Wen Chen, Outi Luova, Kenneth Bo Bielsen, Cai Yineng, and all the podcast guests who generously shared their insights.

To my fellow students and teachers from the Erasmus Mundus MA in Journalism, Media and Globalisation at Aarhus University and City, University of London, and from the Communication University of China—thank you for shaping the early stages of my intellectual path

and for the friendships that continue to sustain me. Special thanks to Henrik Bødker, Teke Ngomba, Bettina Andersen, Morten Brænder, Colin Porlezza, Hu Fang, Zeng Xiangmin and Xiaohong Wang for your continued support.

To my former newsroom colleagues—thank you for the inspiration, mentorship, and lessons that continue to guide my thinking and practice. I still carry that spark with me.

To my friends and family: thank you for being there, always. And to my cousin, Amelia Xinyue Wang—your request for a special mention has been granted.

Finally, I am deeply grateful to all the individuals who generously shared their time, experiences, and insights with me during interviews and fieldwork in China. Though I cannot name you individually, I am honoured by your trust and inspired by your stories.

I began this PhD journey amid an existential crisis, grappling with the question: How to be human in the age of artificial intelligence?

I am happy to report that I am no longer in crisis. I have learned to live with the uncertainty, to accept the messiness of life, to find joy in the day-to-day, and to keep asking better questions.

I love what I do. I appreciate what I have. I cherish the company I keep. I enjoy the moments we share. I embrace my imperfections, and I am proud of what I have achieved—and more importantly, of who I have become in the process.

And I am excited about what tomorrow will bring.

## Abstract

---

This dissertation investigates the evolving relationship between journalism and artificial intelligence (AI), focusing on the case of China within a broader global context. Drawing on a critical interpretivist and neo-institutionalist approach, the study explores how AI technologies are transforming journalistic roles, practices, organisational structures, and governance systems. The research conceptualises AI not merely as a set of tools but as a sociotechnical phenomenon that reshapes power relations among key institutional actors—news organisations, technology companies, and the state. The study employs a multi-method, multi-level research design across five interlinked articles. At the micro level, it examines how Chinese journalists perceive and adapt to AI, and how these perceptions are reflected in their professional role and reporting practices. At the meso level, it analyses the platformisation of news and how algorithmic distribution systems—particularly those developed by major Chinese tech firms—restructure the economic and institutional foundations of journalism. At the macro level, it interrogates the legal and regulatory frameworks governing AI and journalism, comparing developments in China with those in the US and EU to understand cross-national institutional dynamics and normative shifts. The research highlights a trajectory from institutional adaptability to reinstitutionalisation, showing how the traditional norms of journalism are reconfigured by both market-driven platform logic and state-led political imperatives. The Chinese case, while shaped by its distinct media system and historical entanglements, offers insight into broader global tensions between technological innovation, media autonomy, and institutional control. By integrating journalism studies, science and technology studies (STS), political economy, and legal analysis, this dissertation contributes to a transdisciplinary understanding of AI’s impact on the future of journalism.

**Keywords:** *algorithms, artificial intelligence (AI), communication policy, comparative media studies, copyright law, critical political economy, digital journalism, institutional theory, media innovation, news automation, platform governance, sociotechnical imaginaries*

## List of Articles

---

### Article I

**Kuai, Joanne.** 2025. “Navigating the AI Hype: Chinese Journalists’ Algorithmic Imaginaries and Role Perception in Reporting Emerging Technologies.” *Digital Journalism* (forthcoming). <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2025.2502851>

### Article II

Ji, Xiaolu, **Joanne Kuai**, and Rodrigo Zamith. 2024. “Scrutinizing Algorithms: Assessing Journalistic Role Performance in Chinese News Media’s Coverage of Artificial Intelligence.” *Journalism Practice* 18 (9): 2396–2431. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2024.2336136>

### Article III

**Kuai, Joanne**, Bibo Lin, Michael Karlsson, and Seth C. Lewis. 2023. “From Wild East to Forbidden City: Mapping Algorithmic News Distribution in China through a Case Study of Jinri Toutiao.” *Digital Journalism* 11 (8): 1521–1541. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2121932>

### Article IV

**Kuai, Joanne**, Raul Ferrer-Conill, and Michael Karlsson. 2022. “AI ≥ Journalism: How the Chinese Copyright Law Protects Tech Giants’ AI Innovations and Disrupts the Journalistic Institution.” *Digital Journalism* 10 (10): 1893–1912. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2120032>

### Article V

**Kuai, Joanne.** 2024. “Unravelling Copyright Dilemma of AI-Generated News and Its Implications for the Institution of Journalism: The Cases of US, EU, and China.” *New Media & Society* 26 (9): 5150–5168. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448241251798>

# Table of Contents

---

## Part I: Thesis Summary — “Kappa”

<b>1.</b>	<b><i>Introduction</i></b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1	Research context: Situating AI in journalism (studies) .....	3
1.1.1	Journalism as an institution .....	4
1.1.2	What are we talking about when we talk about AI? .....	6
1.1.3	The Chinese case .....	8
1.2	Literature review: Journalism reconfigured in the age of AI.....	11
1.3	Purpose of the research.....	18
1.4	Research questions .....	19
1.5	Overview of articles.....	21
1.5.1	Article I.....	24
1.5.2	Article II .....	24
1.5.3	Article III .....	25
1.5.4	Article IV.....	25
1.5.5	Article V .....	26
<b>2.</b>	<b><i>Theoretical Framework</i></b> .....	<b>27</b>
2.1	Theorising journalism, AI, and state .....	27
2.1.1	The practices, roles, and cultures of journalism.....	27
2.1.2	Sociology of news, media industry, and journalistic autonomy...30	
2.1.3	From algorithmic imaginaries to sociotechnical imaginaries .....	32
2.1.4	STS and the ontological politics of AI .....	34
2.1.5	Institutional interplay in the policy networks.....	37
2.1.6	PEC meets Critical AI Studies.....	39
2.2	Epistemological and ontological considerations.....	42
<b>3.</b>	<b><i>Research Design</i></b> .....	<b>44</b>
3.1	An abductive approach and the social life of methods.....	44

3.2	The empirical context: Global China as method .....	46
3.3	Methods.....	49
3.3.1	Case study .....	49
3.3.2	Document analysis.....	50
3.3.3	Interviews.....	51
3.3.4	Comparative study.....	52
3.4	Reflections on research ethics and researcher positionality.....	54
<b>4.</b>	<b><i>Findings and Discussion</i></b> .....	<b>56</b>
4.1	Journalism disrupted.....	56
4.1.1	Instrumental imaginaries of AI.....	56
4.1.2	Multi-dimensional motivations for AI adoption.....	57
4.1.3	Converging pressures, contextual responses .....	58
4.1.4	Human always in the loop.....	60
4.1.5	Strategic reporting and role negotiation.....	60
4.1.6	Reinstitutionalisation of journalism .....	61
4.2	Technology tamed.....	64
4.2.1	Technology companies as engines of journalism innovation .....	64
4.2.2	Strategic and complex media-tech company relations .....	65
4.2.3	Tech firms as politically embedded actors.....	66
4.2.4	Automating authority: Technologies as governance tools .....	67
4.2.5	Institutionalisation of algorithms and AI.....	68
4.3	Contextual matters.....	71
4.3.1	Copyright and AI: A global shift in legal definitions .....	71
4.3.2	Networked governance in a global context .....	72
4.3.3	Role of law and policy in the erosion of journalistic autonomy..	74
4.3.4	A dialectical view on state, law, and policy as institutions.....	76
<b>5.</b>	<b><i>Concluding Remarks</i></b> .....	<b>80</b>
5.1	Overall summary.....	80
5.2	Limitations and avenues for future research .....	82



5.3	Contributions and implications .....	85
5.3.1	Empirical contributions: Chinese and beyond .....	85
5.3.2	Methodological contributions: Interdisciplinarity.....	86
5.3.3	Theoretical contributions: Institutions and power .....	87
5.4	After AI, what? .....	91
<b>6.</b>	<b><i>References</i></b> .....	<b>93</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b><i>Appendices</i></b> .....	<b>136</b>
7.1	Appendix A: List of interviewees .....	136
7.2	Appendix B: Empirical material examined for Article III.....	137
7.3	Appendix C: Empirical material examined for Article V .....	141

**Part II: Articles**

# List of Tables and Figures

---

## Tables

Table 1. Overview of the Five Articles Included in the Compilation Thesis ....	22
Table A1. List of Interviewees from Various Media Organisations .....	136
Table C1. List of Empirical Material Examined for Article V .....	141

## Figures

Figure 1. Abductive Research Process, Inspired by Kovács & Spens (2005)....	44
---	----

# **AI, News, and the State**



# 1. Introduction

---

When China's state news agency Xinhua launched its "AI news anchor" in 2018, it sparked heated debates worldwide. Many were fascinated by the virtual news anchor's vivid and lifelike appearance, while others found it uncanny and unsettling, critiquing its "impersonal" nature. When a news article generated by Tencent's news-writing bot, Dreamwriter, was granted copyright protection by a court in my hometown of Shenzhen, my former journalist colleagues were alarmed, sharing and reposting the news with concerns about the future of their jobs. My close friends in China, who were obsessed with the algorithm-powered news aggregator app Jinri Toutiao by ByteDance because it always delivered content tailored to their interests, later expressed a belief that the protesters in Hong Kong in 2019 were "mobsters funded by the West," since that's all the news they had been exposed to. This led me to question how the world's largest unicorn at that time, specialising in machine learning algorithms, was shaping the content it served to users. From 3D digital modelling and robotics to automated content generation and algorithmic content distribution, the key terms underlying these phenomena are "journalism" and "artificial intelligence" (AI).

The accelerating presence of AI in all walks of life, especially in creative, intellectual and decision-making fields, such as journalism, forces us to reconsider long-held assumptions about human uniqueness. Having had years of experience in the industry working as a reporter, editor, and news anchor, I have witnessed the transformation of the industry with my own eyes. Now that we have virtual AI news anchors, news-writing bots and recommendation algorithms, I also wonder if what I do as a journalist, editor, and newscaster still matter, and on a deeper personal level, bordering on existential crisis, I have been grappling with the issue of "Being human in the age of artificial intelligence" (Tegmark, 2017). This introspective inquiry led me to the research topic of "AI in journalism". To some extent, "journalism" is my entry point to understanding what AI is, how it is being used, and what the social implications of it are. Thus, journalism serves as a microcosm of a large debate on how AI reshapes

the world and how we can navigate the realities in an era of rapid technological change.

The intersection of journalism and AI has become a critical area of inquiry, reshaping news production and distribution, professional practices, news products, and journalistic values and norms (Ananny & Karr, 2025; Cools & Diakopoulos, 2024; Schaetz & Schjøtt, 2025; Simon, 2023; Stenbom et al., 2023). As AI continues to advance, it becomes increasingly important for the public to have a comprehensive understanding of its implications (Broussard, 2018). Journalists play a crucial role in disseminating information about AI, helping to bridge the gap between experts and the general public (Cools et al., 2022). Meanwhile, as AI-driven technologies increasingly mediate information flows, these also challenge journalistic autonomy, ethical norms, and economic sustainability (Schapals & Porlezza, 2020). Understanding these transformations is essential, not only for the future of journalism but also for broader questions of media governance, public discourse, and democracy.

China presents a particularly compelling case for examining these shifts. As a global AI leader with a highly regulated media environment, China offers a unique vantage point to study the interplay between journalism, technology, and the state. The Chinese government actively promotes AI innovation while tightening control over information, thus creating a complex landscape where journalists must navigate both technological disruption and political constraints (B. Meng, 2018; Stockmann, 2013; Svensson, 2017b; H. Wang, 2023). Meanwhile, the rise of platform-driven algorithmic news distribution further complicates the relationship between journalism and the state, influencing editorial autonomy and business models (J. Meng & Zhang, 2022). By focusing on China, this study provides insights into the broader institutional realignments occurring in journalism worldwide. It highlights how AI adoption interacts with state power, regulatory frameworks, and media economics, offering a critical perspective on the shifting dynamics of journalism in the AI era.

As this is an article-based dissertation consisting of five articles, this introductory summary, or “kappa” in Swedish, lays out the overarching framework that ties together the individual articles included in the dissertation. It synthesises the research and provides a broader context for understanding the articles. The following chapters

(1) provide the research context, literature review, research problem, and research questions of the study; (2) discuss the overall theoretical underpinning and concepts guiding the research; (3) explain the research design, including the methodological choices, the justifications, as well as reflections on research ethics and researcher positionality; (4) offer a broader analysis, integrating the findings across the articles and situating them within the field of journalism studies; (5) reflect on the limitations and potential directions for future research, as well as summarising the overall contribution.

### **1.1 Research context: Situating AI in journalism (studies)**

As Shoemaker et al. (2004, p. 6) put it, “[S]cience tries explicitly to state its theories, to pose them in formal ways, using precise statements so that it is clear what they are saying, to test them, and to confirm, modify or disregard them.” The transition of myself from a journalism industry practitioner to an academic is also to understand that while there is a functionalist approach to journalism studies that focuses on contributing to the knowledge of newsroom practices, a more theoretically grounded perspective allows us to ask deeper questions—about how journalism is shaped by power structures, epistemologies, and socio-technical systems—moving beyond the practice-oriented to explore journalism as a contested and evolving institution within wider fields of cultural production. Hence, as a researcher, my motivation for the research is twofold: First, the goal of the social science research I undertake as a “knowledge-generating enterprise” is to further theory development. Second, I want to contribute to solutions—how can journalists and news organisations harness AI responsibly without undermining core journalistic values? What responsibilities should technology companies bear in shaping the design, deployment, and governance of AI systems used in the production and distribution of news? How should policies and ethical frameworks evolve to ensure that AI serves journalism rather than disrupt it? Through this research, I aim to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of AI’s role—not just in journalism, but in defining the human experience in an era of rapid technological change. To formulate the research problem of the current study, this section lays out some foundational context and explains the subjects of the study, i.e., “journalism” and “AI”, why they matter, and why to study the Chinese case.

### **1.1.1 Journalism as an institution**

Journalism can be many things. It can be a practice, a profession, a business, a social field and an ideology, among others. While AI is pointed to transform many aspects of journalism, technology has not only historically shaped how journalism is done but also how journalism is understood (Örnebring, 2010). With technological advancement, there are emerging theories and perspectives, along with a need for updated conceptualisations of what journalism is and how it develops (Steensen & Ahva, 2015). However, a great deal of the early research on journalism in the computational or algorithmic age has exhibited an internalist tendency and focused on what is going on within the newsrooms (Anderson, 2013). Useful in its own right, adopting a sociological approach to studying journalism and news also opens more opportunities afforded by AI to examine the shifting dynamics in times of change from political, economic, organisational and cultural perspectives (Schudson, 2011). It also invites an interdisciplinary approach to take a step back, examine the imperative to innovate, and thus prevent us from falling into the trap of the technocentric “Shiny New Things” syndrome that exists in much of the journalism industry and scholarship alike (Helberger et al., 2022). With technologies transforming the information environment and professional journalists losing their monopoly in producing and disseminating news, it is even worth examining what should remain the *raison d’être* of journalism, what it is and why it matters (Zelizer, 2019).

To tackle these questions, this study adopts an institutional perspective in viewing journalism as an institution, that is, a social structure that is constituted of shared beliefs, norms, both implicit and explicit rules, and formal and informal practices that work together to sustain its values, legitimacy and endurance (Eide et al., 2016; Lowrey, 2018; Örnebring & Karlsson, 2022; Reese, 2022; Ryfe, 2019; Vos, 2019). It is similar to what scholars have conceptualised as “the press”, encompassing journalism as the action and news as its products, and paying attention to the conditions, contexts, and normative ideals (Ananny, 2023). The institutional perspective offers the frames to analyse micro-level rules and practices, meso-level organisational structures, and macro-level institutional arrangements. This lens enables an investigation into how journalism as an institution interacts



with other institutions such as technology (Katzenbach, 2012) or law (Bannerman & Haggart, 2015). Through this lens, the study aims to tease out what journalism is, how it works, and why it matters in the age of AI.

The research is also inspired by Science and Technology Studies (STS), not the least in how STS scholarship has shaped how “digital” is understood in digital journalism studies as something more than computer codes but also as social, political, cultural, economic and epistemological discourse (Steensen et al., 2019). Early ethnographic research on newsrooms transitioning to online newspapers introduced STS perspectives to establish the basic understanding of the mutual shaping of journalism and technology (Boczkowski, 2005). However, the author later cautioned about the constraints of applying STS perspectives, such as the lack of explanatory power in causal relations and their weakness in understanding the processes at a system-wide level (Boczkowski, 2015). Lewis and Westlund (2015) developed a Four A’s matrix in studying actors, actants, audiences, and activities in cross-media news work. The framework is also inspired by Actor-Network Theory (ANT) to account for non-human actants. These actants could be content management systems (CMS) (Rodgers, 2015), application programming interfaces (API) (Ananny, 2013), and sets of software code (Wu, 2024) in relation to institutional news production.

The articulated goal of incorporating such a sociological and methodological approach concerned with tracing associations is to study “networks of technological actants like interfaces and algorithms, as well as cultural norms and practices connected to them” (Lewis & Westlund, 2015, p. 23). This perspective aligns with the broader view of journalism as an institution that is continually shaped by, and in turn, shapes, the evolving technological and cultural landscapes. By tracing these associations, we gain insight into the processes of de- and re-institutionalisation of journalism (Pickard, 2020)—how digital infrastructures, algorithmic logics, and platform dynamics unsettle traditional journalistic norms while simultaneously giving rise to new ones (Ananny, 2023; Chua, 2023; Nielsen & Ganter, 2022; Simon, 2022). This approach resonates with the normative turn in journalism studies, which critically reflects on shifting standards of accountability, authority, and public legitimacy in an era of algorithmic mediation (Carlson, 2015; Helberger et al., 2022; Karlsson et al., 2023). Through

this lens, journalism is not merely an industry adapting to technological disruptions but a dynamic institution undergoing continual negotiation and reconfiguration.

### ***1.1.2 What are we talking about when we talk about AI?***

AI has been widely adopted in society, from media production to governance, while state actors are busy figuring out the development, deployment, and regulation in pursuit of strategic dominance. The Chinese government set the national strategy to become an AI superpower by 2030 (Chinese State Council, 2017). When Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Secretary Xi Jinping (2019) visited newsrooms, he told Chinese newswriters to “explore the use of AI in news gathering, production, distribution, reception, and feedback. Use mainstream values to guide and override algorithms and effectively improve the ability to guide public opinion.” AI is more than a technology in this context. It is a strategic resource employed by the CCP to construct the information space through its design and further its own interests. The slipperiness of what constitutes AI has also turned it into a policy slogan in China (Zeng, 2020), and even market actors come to manipulate the fuzzy definition of an AI company in order to gain state funding (Deloitte, 2018). AI, in this sense, has become an umbrella term that not only encompasses many different computational techniques applied in a wide range of settings, but also has its ideological underpinning and has been mobilised as a rhetorical resource.

In the popular discourse, the dystopian and utopian framing of AI go hand in hand (Cools et al., 2022), much like the debate on nuclear power. With the rise of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), public concerns have intensified as high-profile AI failures shape the discourse around its societal risks and governance challenges, making AI a contested public issue rather than just a technological breakthrough (Ananny, 2024). In the face of the potential dawn of Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), when machines reach full human cognitive abilities, the issue of the extent to which this technology can both empower and destroy has generated much debate, reminiscent of the debate on how we should harvest and control the power of nuclear energy (Karp, 2023). Some even dubbed the moment in time an AI’s Oppenheimer moment (Tharoor, 2023), asking: What are the

responsibilities for scientists developing new technologies that may have unintended consequences?

But what is AI? Although the term “artificial intelligence” was coined in the mid-1950s in academic workshops at Dartmouth College in the US, there has, until now, been no generally agreed-upon definition (Russell & Norvig, 2003). Beyond the technical understanding, AI can also be many things, such as industrial infrastructures and social practices (Crawford, 2021; van der Vlist et al., 2024). Drawing an analogy from Hecht’s discussion of nuclear power, “there isn’t one nuclear ontology; there are many” (2012, p. 14), this research departs from the idea that “there isn’t one AI ontology; there are many” and now is the moment to understand the “thingness” of AI (Suchman, 2023) and AI’s many ontologies. Thus, asking the question of how to define AI is entering the game of “ontological politics” (Mol, 1999), where the radical consequence is that reality itself is multiple: Are there options? Where are they? What is at stake? How to choose? And much like “nuclearity” (Hecht, 2012), this thingness of AI “is not so much an essential property of things as it is a property *distributed among* things (Hecht, 2012, p. 14, emphasis in original)”. Where attention needs to be paid to the spatial and temporal variations in this technopolitical phenomenon (Hecht, 2012), it is also important to take into account human and non-human actors and important sites of politics (Duez & Bellanova, 2012).

The many ontologies of AI are tied to the longstanding core slogan of STS – “it could be otherwise”. The idea builds on the insights of the “Social Construction of Technology” (SCOT) (Grint & Woolgar, 1997; Pinch & Bijker, 1984), which challenge both technological determinism and the assumption of technological neutrality. It lays the first step of objecting to a total utopian or dystopian outlook on technological development and paves the way for a more nuanced analysis. However, embracing limited determinism is also imperative, as Wyatt (2008) points out: “Our guilty secret in STS is that really we are all technological determinists. If we were not, we would have no object of analysis”. Moreover, Hecht and Allen suggest (2001, p. 5) that “STS scholars can become so focused on debunking the myth of technological determinism that they ignore or dismiss ways in which public conceptualisations of technology themselves serve political or cultural functions.” This conceptualisation process is worth

investigating because, as Bareis and Katzenbach (2021) argue in their article “Talking AI into Being”, the discursive construction can very well turn into material reality. In addition, the flexibility implies that the interpretation remains in flux and does not necessarily close at consensus (Oudshoorn & Pinch, 2003). Even if systems could be stabilised (Hughes, 1987), users could be configured (Woolgar, 1990), expertise could be transferred (Mehos & Moon, 2011), the fusion of technology and human beings needs to be viewed as highly politicised, and we need to “question that which is taken as ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ in hierarchical social relations” (Haraway, 1991, p. 149).

### ***1.1.3 The Chinese case***

China presents a compelling case for studying AI and journalism due to its rapid technological advancements, state-led innovation policies, and unique regulatory environment. These factors converge to shape a distinct media ecosystem where AI-powered journalism is influenced by both market dynamics and government control. What sets China apart is not only its political structure but the historical entanglement between media and the state. While the system is marked by strong central authority, this does not necessarily negate institutional autonomy; rather, it points to different operational logics within the broader networked governance structure (Stockmann, 2013; Zeng, 2022). In the age of AI, the Chinese government has explicitly laid out its national strategic plan to become a global AI superpower by 2030 (Chinese State Council, 2017). This goal is pursued within a broader context of intensifying geopolitical competition, where AI is increasingly framed as a matter of national security. The securitisation of AI in China’s policy discourse serves to legitimise extraordinary state-led efforts to accelerate technological development across both state and society (Zeng, 2022). However, the definitional ambiguity surrounding what constitutes AI has, at times, turned development plans into policy slogans lacking substantive clarity or cohesion (Zeng, 2020).

While some scholars argue that China’s AI strategy is fragmented and diverges from the widely assumed top-down, “whole-of-government” coordination (Roberts et al., 2021; Zeng, 2022), others maintain that it reflects a broader, centrally orchestrated attempt to position China as the world’s dominant AI power (Webb, 2019).

Meanwhile, AI innovation in China's media sector demonstrates transnational impact — a prominent example being TikTok, the globally popular video-sharing platform developed by Beijing-based ByteDance, which relies heavily on algorithmic content recommendation. Alongside technological progress, China is also emerging as a proactive regulator in the domains of cyberspace governance, data protection, and algorithmic accountability, treating algorithms not only as tools but also as regulatory subjects. As China seeks to shape the trajectory of global AI governance and ethical standards, its case warrants continued critical attention, particularly given the unresolved nature of the international AI power struggle and the broader implications for humanity (Christian, 2020; Russell, 2019).

In the realm of journalism, the Chinese state has similarly embraced AI as a strategic tool. Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party and President of China, has explicitly called on newswriters to integrate AI across the entire news cycle—from newsgathering and production to distribution, audience engagement, and feedback—to enhance the Party's capacity to guide public opinion (Xi, 2019). These directives, together with a convergence of political priorities, commercial pressures, and institutional survival strategies, have propelled both central and local Chinese newsrooms to experiment with and implement AI technologies (Jia et al., 2024; Y. Yu & Huang, 2021). By mid-2025, this integration has progressed from isolated experiments to a formalised doctrine, embedded in the strategic plans of news organisations and operationalised in daily journalistic practice.

While the intersection of journalism and AI has been extensively studied in Western contexts, the Chinese case remains comparatively underexplored, largely due to the opacity of its media environment. Although a growing body of Chinese-language scholarship has examined the relationship between AI and journalism, much of it remains untranslated and inaccessible to international audiences. Yet, China's integration of AI in journalism presents a particularly compelling site of inquiry—not only because it represents a convergence of state power, media institutions, market dynamics, technological innovation, and public engagement, but also because it reflects the broader need for a more nuanced understanding of China's media system (Zhao, 2012).

Understanding the role of AI in Chinese journalism is crucial for at least three reasons. First, China has positioned itself as a global pioneer in AI-driven journalism, achieving key milestones such as launching one of the world's first AI news anchors (Sun et al., 2024), adjudicating the first copyright case involving AI-generated news articles, and introducing landmark regulations on recommendation algorithms and generative AI technologies (Sheehan, 2023). These developments not only demonstrate China's technological leadership but also underscore its growing influence in shaping global norms and legal precedents around the use of AI in the media sector. Second, the Chinese context offers a distinctive analytical lens due to its unique configuration of actors—including the state, journalists, technology companies, and the public—which allows for critical examination of both the practical implications of AI adoption in journalism and the complexities of regulatory governance. Third, these dynamics not only influence the trajectory of AI integration within China's journalism field but also contribute to global debates on the ethical, legal, and institutional challenges posed by AI technologies in the media. Accordingly, this inquiry adopts a context-aware and comparative approach: it begins with an in-depth analysis of the Chinese case before drawing broader insights from the United States and the European Union, situating China within a global landscape of journalism-AI transformation and governance.

## **1.2 Literature review: Journalism reconfigured in the age of AI**

The potential transformative power of AI and algorithms in journalism has become a critical site of inquiry within media and communication studies. Scholars have examined this intersection through various lenses, including the transformation of newsroom practices (Van Dalen, 2012), shifting journalistic roles (Schapals & Porlezza, 2020), the future of journalistic labour (Linden, 2017), and the normative foundations of journalistic authority (Carlson, 2015). These discussions have intensified in light of the rapid advancement of AI technologies—from early automation tools to the rise of generative AI—which has prompted renewed debates on journalistic autonomy, public trust, and the implications for democracy (Ananny, 2024; Diakopoulos, 2019; Monzer et al., 2020). However, while much of this research has focused on contexts in the Global North, there is an increasing need to explore how AI is reshaping journalism in varied sociopolitical and media systems—particularly in China, where state power, platform capitalism, and journalistic practice intersect in distinct and complex ways (Danzon-Chambaud, 2021; Reese et al., 2023).

Although not always stated explicitly, a significant portion of the literature on AI and journalism is underpinned by assumptions of technological determinism—especially in debates surrounding the potential for achieving “weak AI” or “strong AI” (Russell & Norvig, 2003), and the presumed impact of such developments on journalistic structures and labour. The trajectory of AI development has been deeply shaped by progress in computing power, the availability of big data, and the refinement of algorithmic models. Originating in mid-20th century research on symbolic AI—which aimed to replicate human reasoning through rule-based logic—early approaches proved limited in handling complexity and ambiguity. This led to a paradigm shift toward statistical learning and machine learning in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The emergence of deep learning, particularly through neural networks and large-scale computational resources, marked a significant inflection point, allowing AI systems to process vast volumes of unstructured data across modalities such as text, image, and video. In the media sector, this evolution has been driven by advancements in natural language processing (NLP), computer vision, and generative models (Gunkel, 2020). Initial applications of AI in

journalism were largely concentrated on automation and recommendation systems—such as those embedded in search engines and personalised content feeds—but have since expanded into more sophisticated and editorially integrated roles.

Recent advancements in artificial intelligence—particularly the emergence of transformer-based architectures such as OpenAI’s GPT models, Google’s BERT, and China’s DeepSeek—have enabled the generation and manipulation of media content with unprecedented sophistication. These models can produce human-like text, synthesise realistic images and videos, and perform complex pattern recognition tasks, profoundly transforming media production and distribution processes (Diakopoulos et al., 2024). Their rapid adoption across digital platforms has been fuelled by the exponential growth of user-generated data and an increasing reliance on algorithmic decision-making to curate, rank, and recommend content. At the same time, these developments have raised serious ethical concerns around algorithmic bias, the spread of misinformation, and the diminishing role of human oversight, prompting calls for more robust regulatory frameworks and governance mechanisms (Porlezza & Schapals, 2024). The evolution of AI thus forms a crucial backdrop for understanding its impact on media systems: it not only reshapes how information is produced and consumed but also raises fundamental questions about labour conditions, media ethics, and the future of democratic discourse (Guzman & Lewis, 2024).

It is important to recognise, however, that this is not the first time journalism as an institution has been reshaped by technological innovation. Historically, journalism has evolved through successive waves of technological change—from the typewriter, telegraph, and radio to television, computers, and the Internet (Pavlik, 2000; Steensen, 2011). Now, AI and algorithms have entered the picture, bringing new tools and capabilities to news production, distribution, and audience engagement. Yet the current moment demands critical reflection: Is the present time different from what has happened before, and if so, how? Carlson (2018, p. 1767) argues, “[A]s algorithmic applications increase, this whole system will adjust, altering modes of journalistic legitimacy, the shape of news knowledge, and societal expectations of journalism.” Growing scholarship highlights the multi-stakeholder nature of AI’s integration into journalism, emphasising the



roles of not only journalists and media institutions but also technology platforms and policy actors (Smets et al., 2022). In particular, scholars have drawn attention to the increasing platformisation of news, wherein content production and distribution are shaped by algorithmic processing of datafied user behaviour (Nielsen & Ganter, 2022; Simon, 2022). As Van Dijck et al. (2018, p. 55) caution, such platform logics may come into tension with journalistic values, as the dominance of algorithmic curation potentially undermines editorial independence and disrupts traditional norms of accountability and public service.

Many journalism scholars have examined the impact of AI across various dimensions of news production and dissemination. Research has focused on the transformation of newsroom workflows (Diakopoulos, 2019; Dörr, 2016; Lindén et al., 2019; Marconi, 2020; Van Dalen, 2012), journalists' perceptions of AI adoption, and the shifting orientations of journalistic roles (Jamil, 2020; Munoriyarwa et al., 2021; Schapals & Porlezza, 2020; Y. Yu & Huang, 2021). Audience responses to AI-driven journalism have also been explored, particularly in terms of acceptance and trust in automated news content (Clerwall, 2014; Ford & Hutchinson, 2019; Sun et al., 2022; Waddell, 2018). One prominent area of inquiry has been the development of automated journalism, where algorithms and automation technologies are used to generate textual, visual, or auditory news content with minimal or no human involvement (Carlson, 2015). In parallel, scholars have investigated the implications of algorithmic news distribution, exploring how such technologies are reshaping newsroom management structures (Rolandsson et al., 2022), influencing national policy responses (Meese & Bannerman, 2022), and raising normative questions about the kinds of news recommender systems that ought to be designed in the public interest (Helberger, 2019). Together, these strands of scholarship highlight the multifaceted nature of AI's integration into journalism and underscore the need to synthesise insights across different levels of analysis—from newsroom practice and individual agency to institutional structures, audience reception, and governance frameworks.

Moreover, a growing body of scholarship has called for an expanded research agenda on AI and journalism—one that includes a broader array of stakeholders beyond journalists and news organisations. This wider lens enables a more comprehensive

understanding of the political economy surrounding AI in media, as well as its broader societal implications and second-order effects (Helberger et al., 2022; Simon, 2022). In particular, this strand of inquiry remains incomplete without closer engagement with a critical yet often overlooked stakeholder: the legal and policy domain. Legal systems and regulatory frameworks serve as structuring forces that shape virtually all aspects of social, economic, and communicative life (Bannerman, 2022). Policy instruments and state interventions are inextricably tied to the institutional trajectory and public function of journalism (Pickard, 2020), making it essential to examine these dimensions through a normative lens. Indeed, a number of unresolved legal and regulatory questions have emerged at the intersection of AI and journalism. These include issues of authorship in the context of automatically generated news (Montal & Reich, 2017), the applicability of libel laws to automated content (Lewis, et al., 2019), copyright challenges in both the production and algorithmic distribution of news (Trapova & Mezei, 2022), and the adequacy of frameworks such as the EU AI Act in regulating news algorithms (Helberger & Diakopoulos, 2022). Such questions signal the importance of bridging journalism studies with legal and policy scholarship. Scholars concerned with the democratic role of journalism have rightly cautioned that, if journalistic AI is to align with public interest values, we must first clarify and critically examine what those values are (Helberger, 2019; Lin & Lewis, 2022). These insights point to fertile ground for interdisciplinary research that interrogates not only the technologies themselves but also the regulatory environments in which they are embedded.

Furthermore, international perspectives and comparative approaches remain underrepresented in the media and communication scholarship, and studies on AI and journalism, highlighting a need to address ongoing epistemological imbalances in the field (Curran & Park, 2000; Hallin & Mancini, 2011). Reviews of digital journalism research have consistently shown a disproportionate focus on the Anglosphere, particularly the United States (Danzon-Chambaud, 2021; Zeng & Chan, 2023). Danzon-Chambaud (2021) specifically underscores the lack of scholarly engagement with AI in journalism within the Chinese context—despite China being a global frontrunner in the implementation of AI in the media sector. This gap

is particularly problematic given the often-implicit democratic assumptions embedded in much of social science research and the limited applicability of widely used Western theories to authoritarian or state-centric media systems, such as China's (Zhang, 2022; Zhao, 2012). Moreover, digital journalism studies have tended to overlook the role of political actors. Yet, as scholars have argued, paying closer attention to the "politics of digital journalism studies" opens up new conceptual spaces for inquiry and theoretical innovation (Ananny, 2023; Carlson, 2023). This perspective is especially pertinent in the Chinese context, where political power plays a central role in shaping media systems and cannot be treated as peripheral.

There is thus an urgent need for more empirical research grounded in China. Many scholars have highlighted the persistent lack of knowledge about China's evolving role as a global superpower, and the importance of deepening our understanding of its domestic and international influence (Franceschini & Loubere, 2022; Heimer & Thøgersen, 2011; Reese et al., 2023). Investigating China's approach to AI in journalism offers not only insights into its own media system but also contributes to a more pluralistic and context-aware understanding of how AI may reshape journalism across diverse political, social, and cultural settings. As Franceschini and Loubere (2022) argue, research on China should be reoriented through a relational lens—one that treats China both as an object of analysis and a site of knowledge production. This calls for greater epistemic reflexivity and attentiveness to China's particularities, without losing sight of broader theoretical concerns. In doing so, scholars must also be cautious not to reproduce dominant Western paradigms uncritically when applying general concepts to non-Western contexts (Reese et al., 2023).

Since the introduction of the Open and Reform policy in the late 1970s, Chinese media have undergone decades of commercialisation, conglomeration, and convergence (B. Meng, 2018; Stockmann, 2013; Zhao, 2008). With the rise of the Internet, technology companies have increasingly entered the news sector, leveraging their control over digital infrastructure and substantial resources for content production to become powerful actors in the media ecosystem (B. Meng, 2018). This decentralised media landscape has given rise to a hybrid regulatory model—what Zhao (2008) describes as a "denaturalised" regime—combining government oversight, market-based

differentiation, and self-censorship. More recently, the proliferation of digital technologies has exacerbated financial pressures on traditional newsrooms, further constraining the viability of independent and critical journalism in China (H. Wang, 2021; H. Wang & Sparks, 2019). Simultaneously, the Chinese Communist Party's tightening control over the information environment has further restricted journalistic autonomy and the media's capacity to fulfil a watchdog role (Svensson, 2017b; Tong, 2019; H. Wang & Lee, 2014).

Against this backdrop, President Xi Jinping's 2019 directive for media professionals to "explore the application of artificial intelligence in newsgathering, production, distribution, reception and feedback, to control algorithms with mainstream value orientation and comprehensively improve our ability to guide public opinion" (Xi, 2019) makes explicit the state's strategic vision for harnessing AI in service of ideological and governance objectives. This state-driven approach to AI adoption in journalism signals not only an instrumental use of emerging technologies but also reflects a broader sociopolitical agenda to shape information flows and public discourse. As China aspires to become a global AI superpower, it is vital to examine how AI is embedded in—and regulated through—its distinctive media and political systems. The development and governance of AI in journalism not only have profound implications for China's domestic information order but also merit global scholarly attention, given the country's rising influence in shaping international AI norms and technological governance models.

To summarise, this literature review positions the dissertation within ongoing scholarly debates by outlining three key research trajectories. First, it traces the technological evolution of AI and its increasingly central role in the contemporary information ecosystem. Second, it examines how journalism scholarship has engaged with emerging issues related to AI, including newsroom practices, journalistic roles, and normative concerns. Third, it foregrounds the Chinese context, highlighting its unique historical, political, and media developments that shape the adoption and governance of AI in journalism. By engaging with these intersecting bodies of literature, this dissertation contributes to journalism studies in three significant ways: (1) by offering empirical insights from China—an underexplored yet geopolitically and technologically significant context in AI and

media research; (2) by bridging journalism studies with critical scholarship on AI, platform governance, and media regulation; and (3) by interrogating the normative and institutional shifts brought about by AI-driven transformations in journalism. In doing so, the study not only addresses existing gaps in the field but also contributes to a more global, context-sensitive, and theoretically informed understanding of how AI is reconfiguring journalism as an institution.

### **1.3 Purpose of the research**

The purpose of this research project is to investigate how the advent of AI technologies is reshaping journalism as an institution and transforming its relationship with adjacent institutions and the public. In this study, AI is conceptualised both as a technical system and a social phenomenon—recognising that technologies require human intelligence to function meaningfully, and that their development and application are embedded in broader social processes that co-construct reality and institutional order. Institution is defined here as a social structure composed of shared beliefs, norms, rules, and practices that collectively sustain its values, legitimacy, and durability. Centring on the case of China, this research draws on an institutionalist theoretical lens to examine how the introduction of AI in journalism disrupts or reconfigures institutional arrangements. It maps how different institutions are strengthened or weakened over time, explores the mechanisms underpinning these shifts, and interrogates who stands to benefit or lose from the adoption of AI technologies. The project employs an abductive research strategy and a mixed-methods design, combining case studies, document analysis, legal doctrinal analysis, and interviews. Beyond enhancing our empirical understanding of how Chinese newsrooms engage with AI, the study seeks to illuminate how AI contributes to the reorganisation of the information space and the redefinition of core concepts such as news, information, and the public within the Chinese context. More broadly, it advances knowledge on the evolving dynamics between news organisations, technology platforms, and state governance within an authoritarian setting and restrictive media environment. The research also adopts a comparative perspective, particularly from a regulatory standpoint. Using copyright as a focal point, it brings in case studies from the United States and the European Union to examine how the three regions differ in integrating AI across the news value chain. This comparative analysis highlights the profound implications of regulatory divergence for the future of journalism and the configuration of social orders.

#### 1.4 Research questions

This study proposes the following three interrelated research questions, each contributing to a multi-layered analysis of AI's impact on journalism. The questions move across levels of analysis—from the lived experiences of journalists to the institutional power of technology companies and the broader regulatory frameworks shaping news production and distribution.

RQ1 addresses the micro level, investigating how journalists in China perceive and navigate AI and algorithmic systems in their day-to-day routines. This focus is essential, as journalists are frontline actors directly engaging with technological changes while negotiating shifts in their professional roles and identities (Cools & Diakopoulos, 2024; Y. Yu & Huang, 2021). Understanding their perspectives offers insights into how AI is reshaping journalistic practices and the epistemic foundations of news. This leads to the two-part question:

*RQ1a: How do journalists, particularly in the Chinese context, perceive and experience artificial intelligence and algorithmic systems in their newsrooms and daily routines?*

*RQ1b: How does this influence their journalistic practices and shape their understanding of their professional role?*

Building on this, RQ2 expands the focus to the meso level, examining the growing influence of technology companies in AI-driven journalism. As AI tools are predominantly developed and controlled by tech firms—rather than by traditional media organisations—these companies play an increasingly central role in shaping how news is produced, distributed, and consumed (Chua, 2023; Simon, 2023). Analysing the institutional logics of these firms, particularly in China's hybrid media environment, helps uncover the shifting power dynamics and possible tensions between technological innovation and journalistic authority. This informs the second research question:

*RQ2a: What role do technology companies play in AI innovation in news production and distribution, particularly in the Chinese context?*

*RQ2b: How do the institutional logics and practices of technology companies intersect with and potentially challenge traditional journalistic expertise, values, and professional norms?*

Finally, RQ3 situates these transformations within the macro-level legal and policy landscape, focusing on how copyright law and other regulatory frameworks respond to AI's disruptive effects on journalism (Bannerman, 2022; Pickard, 2020). By comparing regulatory approaches in the US, EU, and China, this question highlights how different geopolitical contexts shape the governance of AI-driven news production, influencing both industry practices and journalistic autonomy. Hence, the two-part RQ3 asks:

*RQ3a: How do legal and policy frameworks, particularly copyright law, address the challenges and implications of AI innovation in news production and distribution?*

*RQ3b: How do the approaches differ in different geopolitical contexts, specifically the US, EU, and China?*

Together, these questions provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the interplay between journalism, AI, and governance—linking individual agency, institutional power, and regulatory responses in a rapidly evolving media ecosystem. These questions help to illuminate the overarching research aim: to understand how the integration of AI in journalism is reshaping institutional arrangements, power dynamics, and regulatory frameworks across journalism, technology, and state governance in China and beyond, and to examine the broader implications for media practices and global governance in different political contexts.



## **1.5 Overview of articles**

This section provides an overview of the five articles that constitute the dissertation, addressing the research questions spanning the micro, meso, and macro levels from the perspective of the producers (journalists), media text (news articles), media industry (dissemination and business) to policy and regulation. A brief overview is given in Table 1 before more details of each article are presented.

Beginning with the micro level, Article I focuses on newswriters and their perception of AI and how that impacted their journalistic role orientation. To evaluate what the journalists say against what they do, Article II focuses on journalistic products and the reporting of AI and the reflected journalistic role performance. On the meso level, Article III explicitly introduces the role of platforms and investigates how the popularisation of algorithmic news distribution led by tech companies changes the AI news landscape in China. On the macro level, Articles IV and V bring in the legal and regulatory aspects to address the normative perspective of AI and news. While Articles I to IV have a regional focus on China and map out AI and journalism in that context, Article V takes a cross-national comparative approach to also include the US and EU to gain a global perspective of the shifting dynamics among the institutions. The order of the articles reflects a logical progression from the individual level of journalists' perceptions and practices to the institutional and platform-driven changes in news production and distribution, and finally to the broader legal and regulatory implications, culminating in a cross-national comparison to capture the global dynamics at play.

**Table 1***Overview of the Five Articles Included in the Compilation Thesis*

	<b>Article I</b>	<b>Article II</b>	<b>Article III</b>	<b>Article IV</b>	<b>Article V</b>
<b>Title</b>	Navigating the AI Hype: Chinese Journalists' Algorithmic Imaginaries and Role Perception in Reporting Emerging Technologies	Scrutinizing Algorithms: Assessing Journalistic Role Performance in Chinese News Media's Coverage of Artificial Intelligence	From Wild East to Forbidden City: Mapping Algorithmic News Distribution in China through a Case Study of Jinri Toutiao	AI ≥ Journalism: How the Chinese Copyright Law Protects Tech Giants' AI Innovations and Disrupts the Journalistic Institution	Unravelling Copyright Dilemma of AI-Generated News and Its Implications for the Institution of Journalism: The Cases of US, EU, and China
<b>Status</b>	Advanced online publication in <i>Digital Journalism</i>	Published in <i>Journalism Practice</i>	Published in <i>Digital Journalism</i>	Published in <i>Digital Journalism</i>	Published in <i>New Media &amp; Society</i>
<b>Authorship</b>	Single-authored	Co-authored (second and corresponding author)	Co-authored (first and corresponding author)	Co-authored (first and corresponding author)	Single-authored
<b>Author contribution</b>	Conceptualisation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Validation, Writing –	Conceptualisation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Validation, Writing –	Conceptualisation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration,	Conceptualisation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration,	Conceptualisation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration,

	original draft, Writing – review & editing	original draft, Writing – review & editing	Validation, Visualisation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing	Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing	Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing
<b>Level of analysis</b>	Micro	Micro	Meso	Macro	Macro
<b>Related RQ(s)</b>	RQ1	RQ1	RQ2	RQ3	RQ3
<b>Key theories and concepts</b>	Media hype, journalistic role	Sociotechnical imaginaries, journalistic role performance	Media ecosystem, platformisation	Institutionalism, Policy Network Theory	Sociological institutionalism Historical institutionalism
<b>Material</b>	Interview with newswriters	Textual journalistic reports	Publicly available documents	Publicly available documents	Publicly available documents
<b>Method</b>	Interview and thematic analysis	Qualitative content analysis	Qualitative document analysis	Qualitative document analysis	Legal doctrinal analysis, document analysis, comparative study
<b>Theme</b>	Newsroom production and journalistic roles	Journalistic products and reflected journalistic roles	Platform logic in China’s news ecosystem	Copyright regime’s impact on automated journalism	Interplay among journalism, tech and state
<b>Focus</b>	Producer and newsroom perspective	Media text and newsroom perspective	Platforms and regulatory perspective	Regulatory perspective	Regulatory perspective

---

### **1.5.1 Article I**

**Kuai, Joanne.** 2025. “Navigating the AI Hype: Chinese Journalists’ Algorithmic Imaginaries and Role Perception in Reporting Emerging Technologies.” *Digital Journalism* (forthcoming). <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2025.2502851>

This article explores how Chinese journalists perceive, adopt, and report on AI technologies, shedding light on their algorithmic imaginaries and professional role negotiations. It reveals how journalists balance the dual pressures of maintaining critical reporting while adhering to state-aligned narratives. The study highlights how AI is integrated into journalistic workflows and how journalists mediate AI discourse within China’s unique sociopolitical context. As the first step in the dissertation project, this article provides a practitioner-level perspective on how AI is experienced in newsrooms. It establishes how journalists’ agency, attitudes, and practices are shaped by both technological developments and state-media dynamics, setting the stage for further exploration of how AI-driven journalism is structured by industry and policy forces.

### **1.5.2 Article II**

Ji, Xiaolu, **Joanne Kuai**, and Rodrigo Zamith. 2024. “Scrutinizing Algorithms: Assessing Journalistic Role Performance in Chinese News Media’s Coverage of Artificial Intelligence.” *Journalism Practice* 18 (9): 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2024.2336136>

This article examines how Chinese journalists report on AI and algorithmic governance, assessing whether and how critical journalistic practices emerge in an authoritarian media environment. It finds that while journalists scrutinise AI’s societal risks—especially those posed by private tech companies—they simultaneously frame the state as a responsible steward of AI governance. While Article I focuses on journalists’ perceptions and experiences with AI in their own work, Article II extends this discussion to how they publicly represent AI to audiences. The study highlights the negotiated boundaries of journalistic critique and complicates the notion of watchdog journalism under authoritarian rule. These insights directly inform the next article’s examination of the structural role of technology companies in shaping AI-driven journalism.

### **1.5.3 Article III**

**Kuai, Joanne**, Bibo Lin, Michael Karlsson, and Seth C. Lewis. 2023. “From Wild East to Forbidden City: Mapping Algorithmic News Distribution in China through a Case Study of Jinri Toutiao.” *Digital Journalism* 11 (8): 1521–1541. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2121932>

This article maps the field of algorithmic news distribution in China by analysing the role of digital platforms, specifically ByteDance’s Jinri Toutiao. It demonstrates how state regulations and platform logics shape news distribution, revealing a dynamic of state-tech symbiosis in governing algorithmic journalism. This article shifts the focus from journalists to the technology companies that develop and mediate AI-driven news systems. It bridges the gap between newsroom practices (examined in Articles I and II) and the broader industry-level transformations in news production and distribution. The study also underscores how platforms operate within state-defined boundaries, foreshadowing the legal and policy questions explored in the next two articles.

### **1.5.4 Article IV**

**Kuai, Joanne**, Raul Ferrer-Conill, and Michael Karlsson. 2022. “AI ≥ Journalism: How the Chinese Copyright Law Protects Tech Giants’ AI Innovations and Disrupts the Journalistic Institution.” *Digital Journalism* 10 (10): 1893–1912. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2120032>

This article investigates China’s copyright law amendments and landmark legal cases concerning AI-generated journalism. It argues that China’s legal framework prioritises tech companies’ AI innovations over journalistic autonomy, leading to the institutionalisation of algorithmic authorship and the marginalisation of independent journalism. Building on the previous article’s discussion on the dominance of technology firms in AI-driven journalism, this study extends the analysis to legal structures that reinforce power asymmetries between tech companies and news organisations. It highlights how policy decisions shape not only the development of AI technologies but also the economic and professional sustainability of journalism. This article provides a crucial link to the final study, which expands the legal analysis to a global scale.

### **1.5.5 Article V**

**Kuai, Joanne.** 2024. “Unravelling Copyright Dilemma of AI-Generated News and Its Implications for the Institution of Journalism: The Cases of US, EU, and China.” *New Media & Society* 26 (9): 5150–68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448241251798>

This article examines how copyright laws in the US, EU, and China address AI-generated news. It finds that different regulatory approaches—policy silence (US), rushed legislation (EU), and state instrumentalisation (China)—have weakened the institutional standing of journalism while solidifying the power of AI-driven platforms. By placing China’s AI governance in a comparative context, this article broadens the project’s scope, demonstrating how legal frameworks across geopolitical regions influence the future of journalism in an AI-driven world. It reinforces the project’s core argument that AI is not merely a technological shift but a socio-political and regulatory phenomenon that is redefining journalism as an institution.

## 2. Theoretical Foundation and Conceptual Framework

---

The articles of the dissertation project engage with some different theoretical toolboxes and conceptual apparatus to tackle the research problem. While the specific use of those theories and concepts is laid out in each of the articles, this section aims to provide an overview of the overarching theoretical foundation and conceptual framework guiding my intellectual endeavours throughout the design and completion of the research project.

### **2.1 Theorising journalism, AI, and state**

The theoretical foundation of this research spans the micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis. The following sections begin by addressing the more concrete and familiar aspects of the study, gradually moving toward more abstract and less explored dimensions. In relation to journalism, the analysis starts at the micro level, focusing on journalistic practices, outputs, and the construction of professional roles and cultures. At the meso level, journalism is examined as an institution interacting with other institutional actors, contributing to the platformisation of news and shaping the broader journalism industry. On the technology side, the study links individual experiences—captured through the concept of algorithmic imaginaries—to broader, collectively relevant sociotechnical imaginaries. Building on this, it engages with the ontological politics of AI, exploring how technologies are imbued with competing visions of social order. Finally, at the macro level, the research examines interinstitutional dynamics, including the co-evolution of laws, policies, media systems, and technological developments. The following sections provide an overview of the key theories and concepts employed in this study, along with an explanation of how they are interpreted and applied within the research context.

#### ***2.1.1 The practices, roles, and cultures of journalism***

How journalists inform the public is shaped, in part, by their role orientations, which are situated within particular journalistic cultures—that is, the enactment of professional values and ideals

within a given set of social, political, and organisational constraints (Hanitzsch, 2017; Hanitzsch et al., 2011; Mellado, 2021; Mellado et al., 2017). For example, journalists may be motivated—and operate within an environment that enables them—to serve as watchdogs over power structures, holding authorities to account. Conversely, they may feel compelled, whether through internalised professional ideals, external pressures, or a combination of both, to report in ways that align with the interests of particular stakeholders.

AI offers a particularly compelling site for examining these dynamics, as it sits at the intersection of strategic national interests, private enterprise, and what scholars have termed the "algorithmic imaginary"—how individuals envision and make sense of algorithmic systems (Bucher, 2017). In the Chinese context, journalists are not only confronted with the challenges posed by the application of AI technologies within newsrooms, but they also encounter new opportunities to subvert traditional structural constraints. By critiquing algorithmic systems—rather than directly challenging political institutions—journalists can call attention to issues of inequality, bias, and fairness in ways that are less overtly confrontational yet still socially consequential. Thus, by examining professional roles and journalistic cultures through the lens of AI, this research offers insights into the evolving dynamics of China's media system, the shifting role of technology platforms, changing state attitudes toward governance and innovation, and the broader societal implications of these transformations.

Underlying journalists' perceptions of AI—and the strategies they adopt when reporting on AI or other topics—is their understanding of the function of journalism and their role within it. Journalistic roles refer to how journalists perceive, articulate, and enact expectations about journalism's societal function (Hanitzsch, 2019). These roles are discursively constituted and negotiated within relational structures, encompassing normative and cognitive orientations, as well as both practised and narrated performances (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017). Over time, journalism scholars have developed a substantial body of research examining the evolution of professional values and norms, and the ways in which these principles align with—or diverge from—actual newsroom practices. Given that journalistic roles fundamentally shape the media landscape and



influence public opinion, understanding these roles is essential for analysing the dynamics of journalism within any given context.

Recent research has broadened the understanding of journalistic roles beyond the traditional emphasis on democracy and politics, recognising their significance in both political and everyday life (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2018). Within the political domain, eighteen roles have been identified, addressing six essential societal needs, while roles in everyday life relate to areas such as consumption, identity, and emotion (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2018). Focusing on the operationalisation of these professional roles and their manifestation in journalistic outputs, Mellado (2015) proposes six dimensions of journalistic role performance. The presence of the journalist's voice in news content signifies an interventionist role, whereas its absence reflects a non-interventionist or natural disseminator role. The domain of power relations captures how journalists position themselves in relation to those in authority, encompassing both the watchdog and loyal-facilitator roles. Finally, the audience approach domain encompasses service, information, and civic roles, reflecting how journalists orient their work towards the needs and interests of the public (Mellado, 2015).

In the Chinese context, journalistic roles take on distinctive forms shaped by the country's political and cultural environment. A state-driven approach to journalism significantly influences how roles and responsibilities are defined and enacted. Research on journalistic roles in China reveals a complex landscape shaped by the interplay of political, economic, and technological factors (B. Meng, 2018; Ren & Dan, 2022). Investigative journalism, in particular, has shifted from a stance of overt criticism to one of constructiveness, reflecting pressures arising from technological disruption, economic downturns, and heightened political control (H. Wang & Li, 2024). Despite these challenges, many Chinese journalists continue to uphold a public service ideal, with advocacy-oriented motivations associated with higher perceptions of news efficacy and lower levels of news avoidance among audiences (X. Yu & Wang, 2024). Together, these findings highlight the intricate and evolving nature of journalistic role performance within China's authoritarian media system, particularly in the context of digital transformation.

### ***2.1.2 Sociology of news, media industry, and journalistic autonomy***

This study adopts a sociological approach and remains attentive to the pitfalls of technological determinism by situating the objects of study—journalism and technology—within an analysis that brackets a variety of shaping forces, including economic, technological, political, cultural, and organisational factors (Ananny, 2023; Anderson, 2013; Schudson, 2011; P. J. Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). The survival, conditions, and evolution of journalism as an institution are not solely determined by internal journalistic practices but are profoundly influenced by external institutions and structures. Indeed, these external forces often exert greater explanatory power over the "life of journalism" than analyses confined to newsroom dynamics alone (Örnebring & Karlsson, 2022). This sociological perspective is particularly valuable in the study of "AI in journalism," as the algorithmic era has intensified the complexity of value realisation. Today, journalistic processes are shaped by a wide array of stakeholders, including newswriters, business leaders, platform companies, policymakers, regulators, audiences, and non-human agents such as networks and algorithms. These actors interact within intricate networks of power, economic conditions, regulatory frameworks, and cultural histories (Helberger et al., 2022; Simon, 2022).

At the meso level, AI's impact on the economy and financial structures of journalism necessitates a reconceptualisation of the economic features of the news industry (Sjøvaag, 2024). In this context, this study examines news as a market commodity and raises critical questions about the evolving economics of news production, distribution, and value in an AI-driven environment. Such questions have long been contentious, reflecting deep ideological divides (Schudson, 2011). On one side, defending capitalist media ownership is often seen as endorsing profiteering at the expense of journalistic integrity; on the other, criticism of private ownership is sometimes interpreted as a call for government control and censorship, posing threats to press freedom. Both perspectives, however, oversimplify the complex interplay between private ownership, state involvement, and the broader constraints that shape news institutions beyond mere profit motives.

In the age of AI, some local news organisations have embraced AI technologies as opportunities to create new forms of value and address the economic challenges they face (Wilczek et al., 2024). These economic questions also extend to the growing issue of platform dependency, as technology companies now control critical infrastructure and data assets while exerting influence over the news industry through funding schemes, partnership models, and algorithmic distribution systems (Papaevangelou, 2023; Simon, 2023). Understanding the dynamics of contemporary journalism thus requires a closer examination of how different news institutions attempt to shield editorial judgment from business pressures, how they navigate various economic constraints—whether from advertisers, audiences, or investors—and how these pressures differently shape journalistic practices and organisational resilience.

At the macro level, this research also responds to calls for a reconceptualisation of the relationship between news and politics, recognising that any meaningful framework must account for differences in press laws, political institutions, and political cultures (Carlson, 2023; Schudson, 2011). Journalism does not operate outside of politics as a neutral observer; rather, it is inherently embedded within the political process. While this entanglement is often framed as a critique of journalists "crossing the line" between observation and participation, it should instead prompt deeper inquiry into how varying political cultures and institutional arrangements shape distinct news cultures and journalistic practices. To account for the complex interinstitutional interplay and to bridge individual-level agency and institutional-level structures, this research also engages with the concept of journalistic autonomy. Journalistic autonomy is understood here as the degree of independence journalism as an institution can exercise in relation to other centres of power (Örnebring & Karlsson, 2022). Building on Örnebring and Karlsson's (2022) propositions that autonomy is relational, requires boundaries, entails agency, and must serve a purpose, this study pays particular attention to when and how journalistic autonomy is asserted or expressed, when it is absent or suppressed, and the shifting dynamics that shape and contest its exercise.

In the digital era, new dimensions of journalistic autonomy have emerged as journalists contend with evolving technological, economic,

and organisational pressures. The rise of algorithmic gatekeeping, data-driven journalism, and platform dependency has fundamentally altered the conditions under which autonomy is exercised. Scholars have examined how digital metrics, audience analytics, and algorithmic systems increasingly shape editorial decision-making, raising concerns about the erosion of autonomy through market-driven engagement strategies (Christin, 2020; Nielsen & Ganter, 2022; Simon, 2022). At the same time, discussions of precarious labour further complicate notions of independence, as freelance and gig-based journalism increasingly replaces traditional employment structures, influencing editorial choices and content production (Carlson, 2015; Norbäck, 2021). Despite these challenges, journalistic autonomy persists as an aspirational ideal, continually adapting to shifting media landscapes. Theoretical explorations of autonomy must therefore account for its dynamic, relational, and contested nature, recognising that journalistic independence is shaped by an interplay of structural forces, professional norms, technological infrastructures, and individual agency.

### ***2.1.3 From algorithmic imaginaries to sociotechnical imaginaries***

The sociological approach to studying news directs attention not only to how news is produced, distributed, and consumed, but also to the social, economic, political, and cultural forces that shape these processes (Anderson, 2013; Schudson, 2011). Of particular relevance to this research is the view of news not merely as a record of what is publicly notable, but as a machinery of notation—an apparatus that inscribes and legitimises certain events, actors, and perspectives (Schudson, 2011). Within this framework, journalists are understood not simply as neutral observers of reality, but as active participants in its construction. Disentangling the complex relationship between journalism and AI thus requires a theoretical lens that integrates the material realities of technological systems with the collective visions and symbolic meanings that underpin their adoption and use. To this end, this section draws on two complementary concepts—algorithmic imaginaries and sociotechnical imaginaries—to unpack how perceptions of AI’s promises and risks, alongside broader societal

aspirations for technological progress, co-constitute the institutional and cultural landscapes of contemporary media ecosystems.

The concept of *algorithmic imaginaries* (Bucher, 2017, p. 31), rooted in media studies and STS, examines how individuals and institutions conceptualise algorithms not only as technical tools but also as cultural and social phenomena. Scholars have emphasised that these imaginaries are not merely abstract ideas; rather, they profoundly shape how actors such as journalists, technologists, and policymakers engage with AI (Bucher, 2017; Natale, 2021). Algorithmic imaginaries encompass epistemic assumptions about the agency of algorithms—whether they are perceived as neutral, objective, manipulative, or biased—as well as normative expectations about their role in journalism, such as enhancing efficiency or threatening professional autonomy. These imaginaries emerge at the intersection of technical systems and cultural narratives, influencing how AI tools are designed, adopted, resisted, or contested within media environments. For instance, newsrooms may embrace AI-driven analytics as a strategy for navigating economic pressures, framing algorithms as potential saviours of journalism, even as journalists simultaneously express concerns about algorithmic opacity, bias, or alignment with corporate and state interests.

In addition, the concept of *sociotechnical imaginaries* (Jasanoff, 2015; Jasanoff & Kim, 2009) captures the “collectively held, institutionally stabilised, and publicly performed visions of desirable futures, animated by shared understandings of forms of social life and social order attainable through, and supportive of, advances in science and technology” (Jasanoff, 2015, p. 4). Sociotechnical imaginaries offer a valuable lens for analysing the mutual shaping of technology, media, politics, and social structures, revealing how different stakeholders promote competing visions through institutional practices, legislative frameworks, policymaking, and public discourse. Of particular interest is the concept’s explicit attention to the role of nation-states and their policies, as well as its openness to cross-national comparative analysis (Jasanoff & Kim, 2009). Research has demonstrated that sociotechnical imaginaries are often multiple, contested, and commodified (Mager & Katzenbach, 2021). Furthermore, the concept foregrounds both the material dimensions and the temporal dynamics of imagination (Xin, 2023), recognising that imaginaries are situated

within specific historical contexts and that access to resources for materialising these visions is often unequally distributed (Xin, 2023). By adopting this analytical tool, this study remains attentive to both the historicity of imaginaries and the structural inequalities that shape the relationship between imagined futures and actual practices.

The interplay between algorithmic and sociotechnical imaginaries can be theorised through the STS concept of co-production, which posits that technologies and social orders are mutually constitutive (Jasanoff, 2004). This synthesis illuminates how micro-level perceptions of AI tools (algorithmic imaginaries) interact with macro-level visions of societal order (sociotechnical imaginaries) to drive institutional change. For example, journalists' everyday engagements with AI systems—such as automated content generators or audience analytics platforms—feed into broader sociotechnical narratives about data-centric journalism. These narratives, in turn, legitimise institutional transformations, such as the restructuring of newsrooms around algorithmic metrics or the outsourcing of editorial decision-making to technology platforms.

This dialectic, however, is not seamless; it is characterised by contestation. Competing imaginaries collide as technologies are embedded into professional practices and organisational structures (Mager & Katzenbach, 2021). In authoritarian contexts such as China, sociotechnical imaginaries of AI are often tethered to state narratives of "cyber sovereignty" and "smart governance," positioning technology as a means of ensuring national stability and political control (Creemers et al., 2024; Nanni, 2022). In contrast, democratic regimes are more likely to foreground imaginaries centred on transparency, accountability, or market-driven innovation. These divergent visions shape how AI is regulated and contested within journalism, either reinforcing existing power structures or opening spaces for negotiation and resistance.

#### ***2.1.4 STS and the ontological politics of AI***

“Artificial intelligence” is notoriously difficult to define, largely because it depends on how one conceptualises “intelligence” itself. AI carries a range of meanings across disciplines—from computer science and communication studies to philosophy—and is deployed differently in public discourse. Moreover, definitions of AI within each field are

themselves contested and unstable. What was once labelled “AI” often becomes, over time, mundane and no longer regarded as AI once it is widely integrated into everyday life. In the context of journalism, scholars have pointed out that “the term artificial intelligence is poorly chosen” and that “[t]he AI we have today is merely complex and beautiful mathematics” (Broussard et al., 2019, p. 677). While a deeper technical understanding of AI can provide a more solid foundation for social scientists examining its societal implications (Pasquale, 2015; Van Dijck et al., 2018), it is equally important to recognise that AI is not merely a technical object but also a social construct shaped by competing powers, values, and ideologies (Crawford, 2021; Natale, 2021; Verdegem, 2021). A similar duality applies to the related term “algorithm.” While its technical definition refers to a series of computational instructions designed to perform specific tasks (Gillespie, 2014), its social definition highlights the processes and myths that surround algorithmic systems and the possibilities they are perceived to enable (Zamith, 2019). Algorithms do not exist in isolation; rather, they are part of broader algorithmic assemblages (Ananny, 2016) involving myriad actors, practices, values, and norms (Gillespie, 2016; Napoli, 2014). These assemblages contribute to the co-construction of social realities and social orders (Just & Latzer, 2017, 2022).

As discussed in the Introduction, while viewing AI through the lens of the Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) is undoubtedly helpful in exposing the social and political factors involved in the construction of technology—and serves as a useful provocation against essentialist views—what constitutes the “social” and “political” remains an open question. Within the SCOT framework, interpretive flexibility (Sahay & Robey, 1996) is regarded as an essential feature of technology, as notions of what constitutes a good design, how success is measured, and who holds the authority to decide become sites of negotiation among various relevant social groups. Yet when it comes to a technology as transformative and far-reaching as AI, a critical question arises: which “relevant social groups” are granted the opportunity to participate in the game of interpretive flexibility? In other words, greater attention must be paid to the processes of problem formation—those that occur prior to the articulation or framing of issues (Marres, 2007). Moreover, national AI strategies—hybrids of policy and

discourse—shape how AI technologies are integrated into society by promoting particular imaginaries, allocating resources, and setting regulatory rules (Bareis & Katzenbach, 2022). Concurrently, there is politics embedded in technology itself, as technical architectures constitute formative and malleable elements of the institutional environment, influencing the beliefs, practices, and capacities of actors (Katzenbach, 2012). Thus, being mindful of the inherently social and political nature of AI, it is essential to account for the regulatory and legal frameworks that structure its development if we are to gain a more fine-grained understanding of the forces reshaping institutional arrangements.

Inspired by the Human–Machine Communication (HMC) framework applied to journalism studies (Guzman & Lewis, 2020; Lewis et al., 2019), this research seeks to examine three interconnected dimensions. First, it investigates the functional dynamics through which newsrooms integrate AI into journalistic practices and how journalists respond to algorithmic intervention in news production and distribution. Second, it explores the relational dynamics through which newswriters engage with AI technologies and, in turn, reconfigure their relationships with themselves, their profession, and their audiences. Third, it considers the metaphysical implications raised by the blurring of ontological boundaries in journalism in the age of AI. As Suchman (2023, p. 1) suggests, “the thingness of AI, as its status as a stable and agential entity, needs to be made controversial.” In the context of the current AI hype, Bourne (2024, p. 10) argues that “an entire AI value chain is being constructed across investment markets, consumer markets and state circles by a powerful global tech sector that has largely captured the infrastructure of contemporary media and promotional culture, as well as influential state mechanisms.” Bourne further calls for greater transparency around the opaque knowledge apparatus underpinning the construction of AI’s value.

In addressing the “turn to ontology” (Woolgar & Lezaun, 2013), Lynch (2013) proposes an “ontography” that emphasises attending to both philosophical and empirical approaches through historical and ethnographic investigations, rather than beginning with a generalised assumption about the nature of the world. Such an approach provides a way to map the Atlas of AI (Crawford, 2021) by tracing the technical and social practices, institutions, infrastructures, politics, and cultures



that shape AI. Attention to historical perspectives in ontography resonates with the tradition of studying large technological systems (LTS) (Hughes, 1987; Sovacool et al., 2018), which demonstrates that technological development has always been inherently social and contingent. The LTS framework's emphasis on the system's "style and momentum" highlights the importance of path dependence and lock-in effects (Dolata, 2009). While early works on LTS may have overemphasised the successful top-down alignment of systems, later scholarship introduced phases of reconfiguration, contestation, and stagnation, showing that the persistence of technological systems often relies on dominant actors' continuous mobilisation of resources to maintain their advantage (Sovacool et al., 2018). Building on these insights, increasing research on AI and algorithms in communication has similarly adopted the concepts of "path dependence" and "lock-in" to illuminate the rising power of platform companies and their entrenchment in contemporary media ecosystems (Bannerman, 2022; Simon, 2022), alongside other critical tools inspired by STS.

#### ***2.1.5 Institutional interplay in the policy networks***

Cutting across the articles and serving as the overarching theoretical lens of this study is institutionalism, as the research investigates the dynamic interplay between actors and activities and seeks to uncover the underlying institutional logics. This research draws from both sociological institutionalism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) and historical institutionalism (Bannerman & Haggart, 2015), situating itself within the broader family of "new institutionalist" approaches to account for the three key components of the study—journalism, technology, and the state. Institutions both constrain and empower individuals operating within their frameworks, shaping interactions among institutions and actors. However, this balance between constraint and empowerment is not evenly distributed. Some actors are better positioned to benefit from the strengths of institutional arrangements and face fewer limitations, thereby enjoying greater opportunities than others (Örnebring & Karlsson, 2022). Thus, the institutionalist lens adopted here helps illuminate how structures and logics influence the distribution of power, resources, and agency among actors, shedding light on the evolving intersections of journalism, technology, and state governance.

Moreover, this study also accounts for the role of history through the concept of “path dependence,” where past decisions constrain future institutional arrangements (Bannerman & Haggart, 2015). The structuring power of technological infrastructures and legal frameworks has been explored in studies examining how policymaking might alleviate news organisations’ growing dependence on platforms (Helberger, 2019; Meese & Bannerman, 2022). To address criticisms that institutionalist approaches insufficiently account for change, the concept of a “critical juncture” has been introduced—referring to pivotal moments when institutional arrangements are disrupted and meaningful change becomes possible, whether abruptly or incrementally (Capoccia, 2015). In this study, the growing significance of AI governance, set against the backdrop of rapid technological development and the institutional crisis of journalism, is interpreted as a critical juncture. At the same time, the establishment of institutional values is understood as a process of seeking organisational legitimacy—whether through copying other organisations (mimetic isomorphism), through legal or societal pressure (coercive legitimacy), or through professional norms (normative legitimacy) (Hinings et al., 2018, p. 53). Actors can mobilise a range of resources—legal, political, economic, technological, and symbolic—to assert legitimacy and authority in their efforts at “institutionalisation.” However, when social norms weaken and shared understandings erode, these processes may lead not only to “deinstitutionalisation” but also to what can be conceived as forms of “reinstitutionalisation” (Picard, 2014).

To address the interactions and interdependencies among institutions while maintaining a focus on the role of states and policymaking, this study draws on Policy Network Theory (PNT). PNT enables researchers to examine the norms and beliefs that shape stakeholders’ strategies in constructing knowledge throughout the policymaking process. It highlights how governments and other institutions share a common interest in influencing policymaking and its implementation through policy networks—configurations composed of both formal and informal connections among various actors (Rhodes, 2007; Rhodes & Marsh, 1992). By leveraging their resources, positions, and strengths, institutions seek to influence one another to align with their goals and to solve collective problems, engaging in a “bargaining game” in which they both compete and

collaborate to achieve desired policy outcomes through a continuous process of differentiation and isomorphism. Importantly, the outcomes of policy networks are inherently open-ended and often include unintended or unexpected consequences. Thus, the ways in which actors, actants, audiences, and activities are portrayed, discussed, and understood in public discourse—as well as how they are defined by law, regulated through policy, and enforced by courts—are not merely outcomes of the policy network process but also powerful factors that shape the future development of institutions.

At its foundation, PNT posits that policymaking is not a linear process conducted solely by a single authority, but rather a dynamic interplay among various actors who come together to influence policy outcomes. These actors—whether governmental, corporate, or societal—engage in negotiation, cooperation, and at times conflict, shaping the policies that govern public life. In the context of AI's impact on media, PNT provides valuable insights into how institutional actors, often with competing interests, collaborate or contest one another within a networked environment to influence the direction of media policies, the regulation of AI technologies, and the ethical dimensions surrounding their deployment. Institutions form the context within which policy networks operate, imposing structural constraints that shape the network's possibilities (Marsh & Smith, 2000). At the same time, policy networks serve as mediators of institutional influences, structuring interactions by determining access, resource distribution, and decision-making power within the network (Scharpf, 2018). Policy networks can reinforce stability by maintaining relationships and policy preferences over time, creating path dependence in institutional arrangements (Mahoney, 2000). However, they can also act as catalysts for change by mobilising resources, reframing policy problems, or lobbying for institutional reforms during critical moments—events that can be regarded as critical junctures for institutional change (Pierson, 2004).

### ***2.1.6 Political Economy of Communication meets Critical AI Studies***

Concerned with both media systems and power relations in communication, as well as the socio-economic and political implications of AI and algorithms, this research draws on both critical

scholarship and the political economy tradition in communication and technology studies. Rooted in critical political economy (CPE) traditions (Hardy, 2014; Mosco, 2009), this approach critiques how economic structures, corporate interests, and state policies shape AI-driven news production, distribution, and consumption. The primary concern of critical political economists is the allocation of resources within capitalist societies (Wasko, 2014); however, the framework is equally valuable in the Chinese context for examining relations of power, class systems, and other structural inequalities (Zhao, 2008). Acknowledging the social power of AI and adopting the lens of critical political economy allows this study both to analyse and to problematise “the resulting social order, and the underlying ideational and material (production) structures, as well as the institutional strongholds that create and recreate this order” (Wigger, 2022, p. 190).

Some theoretical concepts that emerged from the political economy of communication nearly half a century ago remain highly relevant today, such as the commodification of audiences (Smythe, 1977) and the concentration of media markets (Murdock & Golding, 1973). However, these concepts require updating in the age of AI, particularly in relation to digital labour and the value creation mechanisms of algorithms (Fuchs, 2014; McGuigan, 2019). The dialectical methodology of critical political economy that starts with analysing concrete reality (Jäger, 2022) also fits the context-bound approach of this research project. Of particular interest is also the notion of the politically-embedded nature of technology, which is explored in Smythe’s *Dependency Road* (Smythe, 1981). Smythe’s historical materialist approach also resonates with relevant debates and the cautionary tales that scholars have been directing our attention to, such as on data colonialism (Couldry & Mejias, 2019, 2021), surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019), informational capitalism (Cohen, 2019), and AI capitalism (Verdegem, 2024). Adopting the lens of critical political economy in the Chinese context helps to situate China within a world-historical framework (Zhao, 2007, 2008), particularly as the so-called “China question” remains understudied, increasingly perplexing, and ever more central to global media and communication studies (Curran & Park, 2000; Davis & Xiao, 2021; Lee, 2024).

Building on the critical political economy tradition outlined above, it is necessary to engage more explicitly with the concepts of power and ideology, which form the analytical backbone of this study. The critical perspective requires an examination of power and the iteration of ideology, while remaining vigilant to signs of conflict and contradiction in the production and consumption of meanings (Hardy, 2014). Power is understood here as a generalised term describing the relative positions of entities within social relations and their capacity to shape others' behaviours, outcomes, or contexts (Benkler, 2022). These powers can take multiple forms, including economic, political, coercive, and symbolic power (Thompson, 1995). Ideology, meanwhile, is understood as the value system through which individuals and institutions make sense of the world—defining what is considered causally linked, what is valued, and what is condemned. The economy is conceived not merely as a system of markets but as a network of social relations of production. The “political” in “political economy” highlights the pervasive role of power within economic relations, emphasising how patterns of conflict, coordination, and cooperation are shaped by historical, path-dependent processes (Benkler, 2022). Importantly, this research remains attentive not only to state power but also to the growing influence of private power, particularly in the context of digital technologies. It explores power not simply in the abstract, but as it is concretely structured through legal-institutional frameworks (Cohen, 2019).

The contemporary era of AI-mediated communication offers a particular opportunity to examine the evolving nature of power, as both the technological framework and the communication space are undergoing profound transformation. As Castells (2007) argues, media have become the social space where power is decided, with communication and information serving as essential tools for establishing dominance and enabling social change. Communication is thus simultaneously a source of power and counterpower, and institutional systems are both reflections of power relations and negotiated limits to those relations. The manifestation of power and counterpower in contemporary journalism, particularly in the context of rising platform dominance, has been conceptualised as “platform configuration,” whereby press publishers build their platform presence in an effort to counterbalance platform influence (Chua, 2023).

Scholars have also introduced the idea of “spaces of negotiation,” in which news organisations determine how they produce, distribute, and monetise content vis-à-vis platforms, depending on the platform’s evolution, the stage of news production, and the organisational type (Poell et al., 2022). Building on these theorisations, this research expands the strand of journalism studies concerned with platform dynamics by offering a case study of China, alongside a comparative perspective that includes developments in the US and EU.

## **2.2 Epistemological and ontological considerations**

Developing and clarifying the epistemological and ontological standpoint has been an iterative process throughout the journey of this doctoral research project. It is crucial to reflect on one’s own ontological and epistemological position, engaging thoughtfully in philosophical debates and intellectual labour, as these underlying worldviews inform many critical choices during the research process—from the formulation of the research problem and articulation of research questions to the selection of research approach and design, and ultimately the interpretation of results (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Seale, 2018). Such reflection is particularly important because, as de la Bellacasa (2011, p. 86) reminds us, “ways of studying and representing things can have world-making effects.” Although this process can be laborious, it is a necessary undertaking, especially for anyone embarking on an academic journey. In interdisciplinary research, this becomes even more crucial: researchers must establish a clear view of their own ontological and epistemological standpoint to position themselves effectively, select appropriate collaborators, learn the necessary disciplinary vocabularies, and build common ground for communication. A simplistic rejection of technological determinism—or a wholesale embrace of its opposite, social determinism—risks losing analytical nuance and overlooking potentially useful methodological tools and theoretical insights (Appelgren, 2023).

This research project adopts a constructivist ontological standpoint, viewing journalism, AI, and other institutions as dynamic constructs shaped by societal, political, and technological interactions, rather than as static or fixed entities. The changes observed in how journalism is being redefined by AI are understood as socially constructed and context-dependent. While this study foregrounds the

social forces shaping institutions, it also acknowledges material and structural realities—such as economic systems, legal frameworks, and technological infrastructures—that exert foundational influence. From an epistemological perspective, the research adopts a critical interpretivist stance, focusing on subjective experiences and the meanings attached to phenomena, such as how journalists perceive AI’s impact, while valuing context-specific insights. It also seeks to uncover the power dynamics and vested interests shaping the definition, regulation, and integration of AI into journalism. This approach aligns with critical epistemology, which interrogates structures of power and challenges inequalities and hegemonies.

### 3. Research Design

---

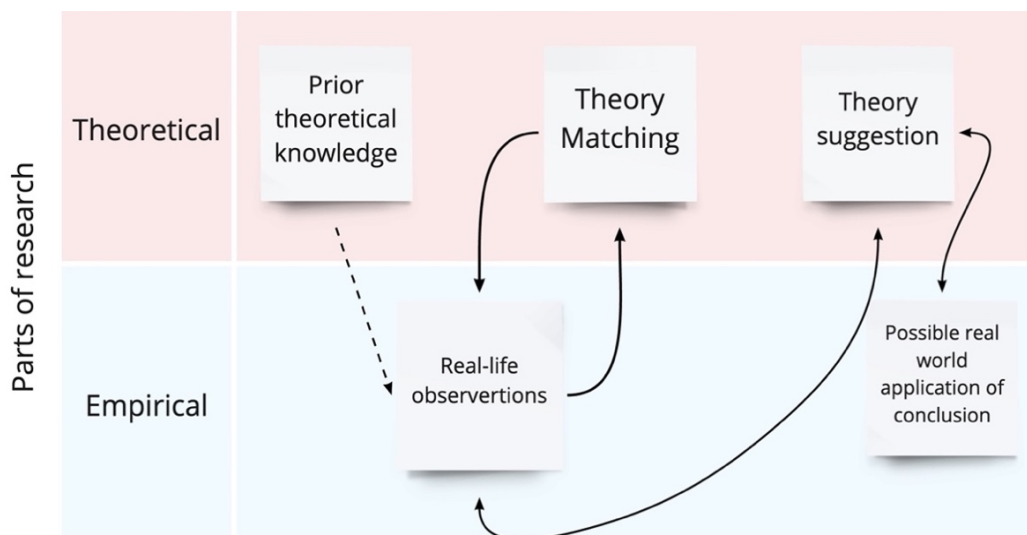
This section outlines the research design, including the overarching abductive approach and the incorporation of the social life of methods perspective. It provides empirical background to the study and explains the range of methods employed, including case study analysis, document analysis, interviews, and comparative study. The section also reflects on research ethics and the researcher’s positionality. For detailed descriptions of methods and operationalisation, readers are referred to the Method sections of each individual article.

#### 3.1 An abductive approach and the social life of methods

This research project adopts an abductive approach, which differs from a simple combination of deductive and inductive reasoning. Instead, abduction constitutes a systematic interplay between the empirical world and theoretical frameworks, aimed at expanding understanding of both theory and empirical phenomena (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). The abductive approach enables this interdisciplinary research to modify and extend its initial theoretical framework iteratively in response to unanticipated empirical findings and new theoretical insights encountered throughout the process. It involves a dynamic practice of moving “back and forth” between theory, data sources, and analysis, continuously matching and fine-tuning interpretations to develop theoretical understanding (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*The Abductive Research Process, Inspired by Kovács & Spens (2005)*





As the research seeks to transcend disciplinary boundaries, creativity is essential to go beyond the constraints of both deduction and induction, which are limited in scope, in order to establish new connections between existing constructs. Instead of focusing on generalisations and their specific manifestations, the abductive approach is also sensitive to the particularities that can stem from, for example, situational environmental factors (Kovács & Spens, 2005). This fits well with the context-aware approach of this study that aims to explain variations in communication practices and appreciate the plurality of communicative phenomena across the globe. The abductive approach is also helpful in interpreting or re-contextualising empirical observations with a contextual framework and generating new insights from the perspective of a different or new conceptual framework across disciplines (Dubois & Gadde, 2002).

Inspired by the “social life of methods” tradition rooted in STS, this research responds to the call to challenge the conventional view of research methodologies as neutral, static tools detached from the contexts they seek to study (Law & Ruppert, 2013; Savage, 2013). From this perspective, methods are not merely technical procedures but dynamic, socially embedded practices that actively shape—and are shaped by—the phenomena they investigate. In this sense, methods are performative: they do not simply represent reality but help to co-produce it. As Law (2004) argues, methods act as “ontological devices” that enact particular versions of the world. Crucially, the social life of methods framework also interrogates the power asymmetries inherent in knowledge production. As Ruppert et al. (2013) observe, methods are frequently embedded in institutional hierarchies that determine whose expertise is legitimised and whose voices are marginalised. In media and communication studies, this approach demands a shift from viewing methods as fixed, prescriptive toolkits to recognising them as fluid, contested, and historically situated practices (Marres & Gerlitz, 2016). By foregrounding the social life of methods, researchers can more effectively navigate the complexities of contemporary media ecologies, generating knowledge that is both critically aware and contextually responsive.

### **3.2 The empirical context: Global China as method**

While the Chinese case may be unique because of its historical political entanglements, China is nonetheless deeply interconnected with global histories, processes, and trends (Franceschini & Loubere, 2022). Seeing “Global China” as integral to the global capitalist system could help us better understand China’s role in the world and the broader systemic forces shaping contemporary global issues. As discussed earlier, China’s ambition to become a global AI superpower suggests that “local” decisions and innovations within its borders may generate ripple effects far beyond them. This interconnectedness is especially salient in the platformisation of news, a phenomenon that has drawn growing scholarly attention worldwide (Hartley et al., 2023). Chinese news organisations face challenges that resonate globally, including competition with technology platforms for audience attention and advertising revenue. At the same time, China’s assertive approach to regulating algorithmic and generative AI technologies offers a potential model—or cautionary counterpoint—for other regulatory environments. The integration of AI into Chinese journalism is thus not only a national development but a global concern, with far-reaching implications for media governance, technological standards, and communication ethics.

In China, the discourse surrounding the strategies and coping mechanisms of news organisations has evolved significantly, reflecting the country’s distinctive political and technological trajectory. From the early emphasis on “new media” in the 2000s, to the shift toward “convergent media” in the 2010s, and now the growing focus on “intelligent media,” each phase marks a progression in how Chinese newsrooms respond to technological transformation (J. Meng & Zhang, 2022). Whereas “new media” was primarily concerned with navigating the early stages of digital disruption, “convergent media” highlighted the integration of various formats, platforms, and channels into unified content ecosystems. The current phase of “intelligent media” centres on the adoption of AI technologies, particularly algorithmic systems and machine learning, to automate editorial workflows, personalise content recommendations, optimise advertising, and enhance audience analytics.

Despite these developments, Chinese newsrooms continue to face structural challenges in reaching and retaining audiences—

challenges that mirror those encountered by media organisations in the West, largely due to the dominance of technology platforms (H. Wang & Sparks, 2019). Nevertheless, Chinese journalists generally express optimism about the integration of AI-powered technologies into the news value chain, often viewing them as tools to improve efficiency and reduce operational costs (Y. Yu & Huang, 2021). Meanwhile, the public tends to perceive AI in journalism not as a replacement for traditional reporting, but as a complementary tool (Sun et al., 2024). This dual perspective underscores the importance of implementing AI thoughtfully, with attention to both technological innovation and the preservation of core journalistic values.

Technological advancement in China's media sector has unfolded under significant state intervention, aligned with the strategic objective of enhancing journalists' capacity to guide public opinion, as articulated by Xi Jinping in 2019. As a result, Chinese newsrooms are tasked not only with exploring new business models amid intensifying market competition but also with fulfilling their core political mandate: propagating Chinese Communist Party (CCP) policies and ideology (Long & Shao, 2021). These dual imperatives take place within a broader context of the CCP's increasing control over platform power and the information ecosystem more broadly (Creemers et al., 2024; Nanni, 2022). In recent years, Chinese authorities have introduced a series of laws and regulatory measures targeting the tech sector, including anti-monopoly initiatives and legislation on personal information protection, data governance, and cybersecurity. Of particular relevance in the algorithmic age is the regulatory framework introduced from 2022 onward, spearheaded by the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC). This framework includes dedicated regulations on recommendation algorithms, deep synthesis technologies, and generative AI. Notably, China's generative AI regulations took effect in August 2023, preceding the formal adoption of the European Union's AI Act later that year.

It is worth noting that, unlike the technology sector—which is subject to increasingly detailed regulatory oversight—the news industry in China operates without a formalised legal framework. This regulatory ambiguity affords Chinese authorities considerable flexibility to shape and adapt governance practices in response to shifting conditions and emerging technological challenges (H. Wang &

Lee, 2014). As China positions itself not only as an alternative to liberal democracies but also as a global leader in the development and governance of AI, it becomes essential to examine how AI is applied within its distinctive information ecosystem. As argued in this section, the use of AI in Chinese newsrooms reflects the unique dynamics of China's media system and political context—dynamics that both parallel and diverge from developments in liberal democratic societies. While Chinese newsrooms contend with pressures similar to their counterparts elsewhere, such as competition with platform companies for audience attention and advertising revenue, their motivations for technological innovation are also shaped by political imperatives. Understanding this dual imperative—economic and political—is crucial for analysing the transformative impact of AI on journalistic practice and the profession of journalism in China. In this sense, China offers a particularly important case for studying AI in journalism: it is not developing in isolation but is increasingly shaping global debates, regulatory standards, and implications for newsrooms, publics, and state actors around the world.

### **3.3 Methods**

#### **3.3.1 Case study**

The case study, as an empirical method, involves an in-depth investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-world context (Yin, 2018). This approach is well-suited to the goals of this research project, which examines complex and context-sensitive dynamics involving journalism, technology, and governance. Given that there may be more variables of interest than data points, the case study serves as an all-encompassing mode of inquiry with its own logic of design, data collection, and analysis. It typically involves triangulating data from multiple sources—such as documents, archival records, interviews, observations, and physical artefacts—to establish a chain of evidence and develop a comprehensive understanding of the case (Yin, 2018). Case study research aligns closely with the abductive approach adopted in this dissertation, particularly through its iterative process of data collection and theory development. The method's inherent theory-building orientation complements the logic of abduction, which moves between empirical observations and theoretical refinement (Dubois & Gadde, 2002; Kovács & Spens, 2005). As Vaughan (1992, p. 195) notes, “[T]he paradox of theory is that at the same time it tells us where to look, it can keep us from seeing.” Similarly, Weick (1979, p. 38) warns against the trap of “describing everything, and as a result describing nothing,” urging researchers to “invest in theory to keep some intellectual control over the burgeoning set of case description.” Therefore, case study research requires a careful balance of explanation building, theory matching, and ongoing reflexivity—including the exploration of alternative interpretations.

Importantly, case study research is not intended to produce statistical generalisations but rather to analytically generalise from case study evidence to theoretical propositions (Yin, 2018, p. 38). In this dissertation, the individual articles employ either single or multiple, and holistic or embedded case study designs. Collectively, the dissertation adopts a multiple-case embedded design, with units of analysis operating at multiple levels. The project encompasses explanatory, descriptive, and exploratory dimensions, contributing both empirical insight and theoretical development. While case study research offers rich, context-specific understanding, it is not without limitations. These include the potential for researcher bias in data

interpretation, difficulties in generalising findings, and the risk of over-description at the expense of analytical clarity. To mitigate these risks, this study maintains intellectual focus through theory-informed inquiry, employs triangulation across multiple data sources, and embraces ongoing reflexive engagement with the research process. These strategies strengthen the validity and analytical robustness of the findings.

### **3.3.2 Document analysis**

As members of a record-keeping society, researchers today have access to a vast array of printed and digital materials. Document analysis refers to the systematic procedure of reviewing and evaluating such materials by locating, selecting, appraising, and synthesising the information they contain (Bowen, 2009). In this project, document analysis became not only a useful method but a necessary one when COVID-19 travel restrictions disrupted the original fieldwork plan in the autumn of 2020. The method offered a practical, unobtrusive, and cost-effective approach, with relatively fewer ethical concerns compared to some other qualitative methods (Morgan, 2022). In case study research, document analysis is particularly valuable for corroborating and augmenting evidence from other sources and is often used as a form of triangulation (Denzin, 2009; Yin, 2018). Documents can provide background and contextual data, suggest new lines of inquiry, and serve as supplementary sources to guide observation or interviews. A key strength of document analysis lies in its ability to track policy or institutional change over time. For instance, in Article IV, examining successive versions of the Chinese Copyright Law enabled us to trace a professionalisation trend alongside an increasing concentration of regulatory power. In Article III, by analysing various documents—including company press releases, terms of service, media coverage, and executive interviews—on ByteDance, we were able to identify shifting attitudes toward the concept of “news” and observe the tech sector’s progressive alignment with state expectations amid growing political pressure.

However, this method is not without limitations. Common challenges include low retrievability, incomplete or selective reporting, and limited contextual detail (Bowen, 2009; Morgan, 2022; Yin, 2018). Documents should not be treated as neutral or literal accounts of

events; instead, they must be critically assessed for potential biases, especially in environments characterised by censorship or self-censorship. To address these challenges, this study triangulates document analysis with other qualitative methods, cross-references sources, and carefully evaluates the origins, authorship, and context of the documents examined. In politically sensitive settings, alternative or unofficial sources can offer valuable counter-narratives. Transparency is enhanced by explicitly acknowledging the limitations and biases of documentary materials and by thoroughly documenting methodological choices to support the credibility of the research.

### ***3.3.3 Interviews***

In line with the research questions, this study also employs semi-structured, in-depth interviews and a thematic analytical approach—particularly in Article I—to investigate Chinese journalists’ algorithmic imaginaries, their strategies for navigating the AI hype, and the professional roles reflected in these processes. The use of qualitative methods is grounded in the need to capture the nuanced, context-dependent experiences of journalists, which are shaped by China’s distinct political, social, and technological environments (Y. Yu & Huang, 2021). The semi-structured interview format enabled deep exploration of individual perspectives, while allowing flexibility to adapt questions and follow emerging themes during the conversations (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). A purposive sampling strategy was adopted to recruit participants representing a diversity of media organisations in China (Campbell et al., 2020). The final sample comprised 20 journalists working across different beats and media formats, representing a range of news organisations at the national, regional, and local levels—including one freelancer—spread across multiple geographical locations (see Appendix A). This diversity aimed to capture a wide spectrum of organisational contexts and constraints shaping journalistic practices. All participants were anonymised, and identifying details—including names and affiliations—were removed in accordance with research ethics and participant requests.

Data collection took place between February and September 2024 through in-person and phone interviews, depending on the participant’s location and preference. Interviews ranged from 40 to 90 minutes, allowing for substantive engagement while respecting

participants' time constraints. An interview protocol (see Article I) was developed to ensure consistency and maintain focus during the sessions (Yin, 2018). Inspired by the abductive approach to case studies (Dubois & Gadde, 2002) and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), data were analysed in three coding stages. The first cycle involved close reading and line-by-line coding to generate descriptive codes. In the second cycle, codes were organised and synthesised into interpretive categories, bridging empirical insights with theoretical frameworks. The third cycle employed axial coding to group smaller codes into broader categories based on recurring patterns. This iterative process resulted in four overarching themes aligned with the research questions. Selected interview transcripts were translated into English for use in published articles, and excerpts were lightly edited for clarity while preserving the original meanings.

#### ***3.3.4 Comparative study***

Comparative inquiry into media and communication phenomena within and beyond China remains relatively limited (Liu & Su, 2021). This gap not only reduces the visibility of China-specific research in certain subfields but also restricts opportunities for reciprocal engagement with broader theoretical debates. It further constrains the development of empirically grounded, cross-contextual comparisons and limits progress toward more universally applicable media and communication theories (G. Wang & Huang, 2016). A comparative approach is thus essential, as it foregrounds the importance of context and embraces the need for context-aware analysis. As Hallin and Mancini (2011, p. 515) argue, "theorising the role of context is precisely what comparative analysis is about." Zhao (2012) has similarly emphasised the need to account for political structures, technological infrastructures, and historical legacies when conducting comparative studies of media systems, an approach that also resonates with the historical-institutionalist orientation of this research.

In Article V in particular, the study adopts a cross-national, multiple-case study design (Yin, 2018), drawing on insights from comparative law (Reitz, 1998), comparative politics (Anckar, 2008), and media systems research (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, 2011). This design is complemented by legal doctrinal analysis (Tiller & Cross, 2006) and document analysis (Bowen, 2009). The selection of China,



the United States (US), and the European Union (EU) is justified by their leadership in the development and implementation of automated journalism (Dörr, 2016; Jia, 2020) and their global influence in AI governance and technology policy (Bareis & Katzenbach, 2022). Their differing legal traditions, media systems, and sociopolitical environments offer a “most different systems” design (Anckar, 2008), which enables the analysis of structural and contextual variables influencing policy outcomes. This approach facilitates a deeper understanding of the institutional arrangements, convergences, divergences, and contextual specificities that shape the governance of AI in journalism across diverse geopolitical settings.

This comparative dimension is integral to the broader aim of this dissertation: to understand how institutional arrangements and sociotechnical imaginaries evolve in response to AI integration in journalism across different political and regulatory environments. By juxtaposing China with the US and EU, the research sheds light not only on national particularities but also on shared global tensions surrounding automation, platformisation, and journalistic autonomy. The comparative analysis enables theoretical refinement by exposing how concepts such as algorithmic governance, institutional power, and media reform play out differently across diverse contexts. It also strengthens the analytical generalisability of the study by identifying patterns of convergence and divergence, thereby contributing to the development of a more globally attuned framework for understanding the institution of journalism in the algorithmic age.

### **3.4 Reflections on research ethics and researcher positionality**

Ethical considerations are integral to every stage of the research process—from design and implementation to analysis, writing, and dissemination. Research ethics serve a foundational role in academic inquiry by promoting the core aims of research, including the pursuit of knowledge, truth, and the minimisation of harm or error. This study was conducted in accordance with Karlstad University’s Research Ethics Committee guidelines (approved under registration numbers HS 2023/1258 and HS 2024/150), and it complies with the requirements of the Swedish Ethical Review Authority. Ethical protocols observed include informed consent, data privacy, and responsible data management. The lawful basis for processing research data is grounded in the public interest and the explicit informed consent of participants. As a doctoral research project supervised at Karlstad University, the university functions as the data controller. All research data were stored within secure systems provided by the university, with appropriate safeguards to prevent unauthorised access. Data management procedures complied with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the standards of the Swedish Authority for Privacy Protection.

Ethical risk assessment was undertaken at the outset of the project and continued as a dynamic process throughout the research. Risks can arise retrospectively, and since future implications of data usage are often unpredictable, a cautious and reflective stance was maintained. As Koehler (2022) and Svensson (2017a) caution, technological affordances can obscure the risks researchers inadvertently generate through digital traces and metadata. Particular attention was required when conducting fieldwork in China, where political sensitivities, censorship, and surveillance present unique challenges. Researchers must carefully navigate red lines (Glasius et al., 2018), build and maintain trust within the field—especially within the cultural context of *guanxi* (Heimer & Thøgersen, 2011)—and manage restricted access to data, digital security concerns, and the imperative to protect informants (Liu, 2022; Svensson, 2006; Zhang, 2022). All fieldwork was conducted in accordance with Karlstad University’s ethical protocols, with guidance from the Security and IT Departments.

In parallel, growing calls within media and communication studies and science and technology studies (STS) highlight the need for greater transparency regarding researcher positionality. Both fields increasingly question the notion of neutrality and encourage researchers to explicitly acknowledge their values, commitments, and standpoint. As Sismondo (2010, p. 134) suggests, such transparency not only enhances the practical value of scholarship but also enables researchers to retain greater control over how their work is interpreted and applied. Following Haraway's (1988) notion of "embodied objectivity," this research recognises that reflexivity is central to scientific rigour and epistemic accountability. It also provides a pragmatic compass in politically sensitive research environments, allowing scholars to anticipate and navigate risks more responsibly (Glasius et al., 2018).

This is not a call for universal prescriptions, but rather an appeal to researchers to look inward. As Martin et al. (2015) ask, only when we can answer "why do 'we' care" can we begin to ask "how to care." This research is both intellectually and personally motivated. My perspective has been shaped by my upbringing, academic training, institutional affiliations, and disciplinary influences. I acknowledge that my positionality may influence how I interpret and analyse the role of AI in journalism. Rather than pursuing an artificial objectivity, I adopt a reflective stance—one that critically interrogates how my assumptions, experiences, and epistemological commitments have shaped the research process.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

---

While each article in this dissertation has its own focus, research questions, findings, and discussions, this section synthesises their insights to address the overarching research questions guiding the project. Relevant articles will be referenced where applicable.

### 4.1 Journalism disrupted

The first twofold research question, RQ1a asks, “How do journalists, particularly in the Chinese context, perceive and experience artificial intelligence and algorithmic systems in their newsrooms and daily routines?” and RQ1b, “How does this influence their journalistic practices and shape their understanding of their professional role?” This first section focuses on these questions and covers the findings related to the journalistic actors, namely the news organisations and media professionals. There are five key observations: 1) Chinese journalists’ narrow sociotechnical imaginaries of AI have led them to treat AI as mere tools in journalistic production and do not fear it as a kind of existential threat; 2) The use of these AI tools in Chinese newsrooms are motivated by various forces, including political, economic and professional; 3) When using the AI tools, Chinese newsrooms have many shared concerns and challenges with their Western counterparts, namely adapting to platform logic and emerging media consumption behaviours from the audience; 4) While not technology-resistant, full automation is not desirable in fear of political risks, and a human being will always be the final gatekeeper in Chinese newsrooms; 5) When it comes to reporting on AI, Chinese journalists are able to critically report on AI by focusing on tech companies rather than the state as subject of reporting and to fulfil their watchdog role as well as their loyal-facilitate role. These five observations collectively shed light on the dynamics of journalism’s reinstitutionalisation in the Chinese context during the age of algorithms.

#### 4.1.1 *Instrumental imaginaries of AI*

First, as demonstrated in Article I, Chinese journalists tend to perceive AI primarily as a pragmatic tool for enhancing newsroom efficiency, rather than as a disruptive force threatening journalistic identity or

labour. Interviews conducted in 2024 revealed that many newswriters used the term “AI” almost interchangeably with “ChatGPT” and similar generative tools—primarily developed by US-based companies such as OpenAI. This conflation suggests that their algorithmic imaginaries are shaped, and arguably constrained, by a narrow focus on generative chatbots. AI is frequently framed in terms of text generation rather than as part of a broader ecosystem of algorithmic infrastructures that govern content distribution, recommendation, and audience analytics.

This instrumental view contributes to relatively low resistance to AI adoption in Chinese newsrooms. Journalists largely interpret these technologies as extensions of existing workflows, rather than as replacements for editorial judgement or creative labour. However, this underexamined framing also reveals a lack of technical literacy, limiting their capacity to engage critically with the wider implications of AI development and governance. That said, the pragmatic stance adopted by many journalists also reflects an effort to assert the continued relevance of human editorial labour. Interviewees often emphasised their “irreplaceable” capacities for producing creative, context-sensitive, and critical journalism—attributes they viewed as beyond the capabilities of current AI systems.

Importantly, journalists also expressed awareness of AI’s limitations and risks, including concerns about data privacy, factual inaccuracies, and the opacity of algorithmic processes. Several interviewees raised questions around authorship, transparency, and copyright, indicating an emerging attentiveness to the legal and ethical dimensions of AI in journalism. This combination of pragmatic acceptance and critical reflection points to a form of resilient adaptability within Chinese journalism. It resonates with prior findings (Y. Yu & Huang, 2021), while also illustrating how sociotechnical imaginaries shape not only the uptake of AI technologies but also the frameworks through which they are interpreted and governed in different media systems.

#### ***4.1.2 Multi-dimensional motivations for AI adoption***

Second, the motivations behind AI innovation in Chinese newsrooms are multi-layered and cannot be reduced to mere top-down directives. While all news organisations in China are state-affiliated, their pursuit of AI-driven transformation reflects more than political compliance. As

detailed in Article I, many interviewees cited economic incentives—particularly the need to “cut costs and increase efficiency”—as central drivers of AI adoption. These motivations mirror global trends in the media sector, where financial pressures have made automation an appealing solution to workforce reductions and productivity demands (Cools & Diakopoulos, 2024; Linden, 2017). Nevertheless, the political dimension remains deeply significant. China’s ambition to position itself as a global AI superpower has created a discursive and institutional climate in which technological modernisation is framed as a national imperative. Within this context, media organisations are expected not only to report favourably on AI development but also to embody technological progress through their own practices. As such, AI adoption serves both symbolic and functional purposes—signalling loyalty to state objectives while simultaneously enabling operational optimisation.

Crucially, the impetus for AI integration is not solely top-down. Pressures on news organisations emerge from multiple directions. Structured state-led initiatives and policy signals often coexist with bottom-up experimentation by journalists and editors, who actively test AI tools to improve workflow efficiency or content delivery. Additionally, the growing dominance of digital platform companies has introduced new forms of influence. As explored in Article III, the platformisation of news has forced editorial teams to adapt content production and distribution strategies to algorithmic logics, further incentivising AI adoption. This convergence of political alignment, economic rationality, and technological adaptation reveals the complex institutional environment shaping newsroom behaviour in China. While embedded in a distinct political-economic system, many of these motivations resonate with patterns observed in other media systems—underscoring the transnational nature of AI’s influence while highlighting the particular configurations through which it manifests in the Chinese context.

#### ***4.1.3 Converging pressures, contextual responses:***

##### ***Navigating platform power***

Third, counterbalancing platform power has emerged as a shared concern among both Chinese and Western newsrooms. While Chinese news organisations are expected to serve explicit state interests and

often benefit from public funding or institutional support, they are not immune to the broader challenges of digital transformation. Despite not facing the same existential market pressures as many of their counterparts in liberal media systems, Chinese newsrooms nonetheless experience tensions that mirror those observed in Western contexts. As demonstrated in Article III, one of the most acute areas of strain lies in news distribution. In both China and the West, media organisations must navigate the algorithmic infrastructures of digital platforms. These platforms—whether domestic giants like Tencent and ByteDance or global actors like Meta and Google—prioritise engagement metrics such as virality, click-through rates, and algorithmic visibility. This commercial logic often runs counter to editorial values and the journalistic mission to serve the public interest (Meese & Bannerman, 2022; Smets et al., 2022). As a result, newsroom priorities are increasingly shaped by platform incentives, undermining traditional gatekeeping authority and raising concerns about platform dependency (Simon, 2023) and the erosion of journalistic autonomy (Örnebring & Karlsson, 2022).

Chinese journalists, like their Western counterparts, must adapt to algorithmically shaped audience expectations, including growing demand for personalised, mobile-first, and multimedia content. At the same time, they confront structural inequalities within their own media system. These include disparities in access to resources, technological infrastructure, and skilled personnel—especially between well-resourced central news outlets and smaller, regional or local organisations (Wilczek et al., 2024). This internal digital divide compounds the challenges of platformisation. Taken together, these observations suggest that despite distinct political and institutional arrangements, the digital transformation of journalism is producing convergent pressures across global contexts. However, the ways in which these pressures are managed remain highly context-dependent—shaped by the political economies, regulatory frameworks, and media cultures in which they unfold. These findings reinforce the value of comparative analysis that resists simplistic binaries of authoritarian versus liberal systems, instead attending to the hybrid, evolving dynamics of journalism under platform capitalism.

#### ***4.1.4 Human always in the loop***

Fourth, while Chinese newsrooms are generally open to adopting new technologies, full automation is widely regarded as undesirable—not due to technological scepticism alone, but primarily because of political risks. Human editors continue to serve as essential gatekeepers in the editorial process, not only upholding professional and ethical standards but also acting as a critical buffer against potential political fallout. In a tightly regulated media environment where content must align with official narratives, the risk of algorithmic error—or worse, politically inappropriate outputs—carries serious consequences. As one journalist explained, “I’d clearly label content generated with AI. I find that AI bots lie, and they make up stories. I have to put a disclaimer so that I assume no responsibility” (2e, Article I). This cautious stance reflects more than a technical concern; it reveals a strategic awareness of the stakes of automation in a context where errors can have career- or organisation-threatening implications. The preference for human oversight also aligns with the instrumental sociotechnical imaginaries prevalent among Chinese journalists—imaginaries that frame AI as a tool for increasing efficiency, in line with broader state discourses on innovation and modernisation.

Yet these imaginaries are not uncritical. Journalists demonstrated a clear-eyed understanding of AI’s current limitations, particularly its unreliability in high-stakes, politically sensitive contexts. In this setting, the insistence on keeping “humans in the loop” is not simply a matter of editorial pride but a pragmatic response to the realities of authoritarian governance. The human editor becomes not just a curator of journalistic quality, but a guarantor of political compliance. This underscores the limits of techno-solutionism in China’s media system—where responsibility and accountability cannot be delegated to machines.

#### ***4.1.5 Strategic reporting and role negotiation***

Finally, when reporting on AI and related technologies, Chinese journalists operate within a constrained yet strategic discursive space, where direct criticism of the state is largely impermissible. Instead, critical attention is redirected toward technology companies, with journalistic coverage raising concerns about algorithmic bias, data privacy, and the broader societal impacts of platform governance. As



shown in Article II, limited technical expertise does not prevent journalists from producing critical, informative, and engaging stories. However, rather than developing a dedicated “algorithms beat” or engaging in formal algorithmic accountability reporting (Diakopoulos, 2021), their efforts align more closely with what Napoli (2021) terms the “platform beat.” By focusing on private enterprise rather than state actors, Chinese journalists navigate political sensitivities while still performing aspects of the watchdog role. In doing so, they contribute to public discourse and, in some cases, catalyse policy responses. Notably, investigative reporting on the algorithm-driven gig economy has sparked national debate and prompted government intervention to protect gig workers and regulate exploitative algorithmic practices. These instances suggest that journalistic critique can yield tangible outcomes—even within tightly controlled media environments.

Yet, this dynamic is inherently double-edged. While such reporting may implicitly critique systemic issues, it simultaneously serves to bolster the state’s legitimacy. The government is often cast as a rational, corrective force—stepping in to discipline the excesses of private capital and enforce responsible AI governance (Article II). In this framing, the state is portrayed as a benevolent regulator rather than a target of journalistic scrutiny. Thus, while Chinese journalists retain a degree of agency and continue to uphold core professional values, their role performances remain bounded by broader structures of political power and ideological alignment (Ren & Dan, 2022). This reflects a form of negotiated autonomy—one that enables selective accountability reporting while reinforcing, rather than challenging, the dominant political order.

#### ***4.1.6 Reinstitutionalisation of journalism***

Together, these five observations illuminate the contours of journalism’s reinstitutionalisation in the Chinese context in the algorithmic age. Reinstitutionalisation refers to the process by which an institution is reconfigured—its roles, practices, norms, and legitimacy reshaped—in response to new pressures, particularly those stemming from technological and political change (Caplan & boyd, 2018; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Rather than experiencing institutional breakdown, journalism in China is undergoing a

recalibration—adapting to accommodate AI within the boundaries of state-defined legitimacy and professional survival.

*First*, the narrow sociotechnical imaginaries that frame AI as apolitical tools rather than systemic disruptors reflect a constrained space for journalistic imagination. This reinforces a model of journalism that is instrumentally useful to both the newsroom and the state. Such operational framing reaffirms journalism's role as a pragmatic institution, rather than a site of democratic contestation, limiting critical engagement with AI's structural consequences and preserving institutional stability (Y. Yu & Huang, 2021). *Second*, the integration of AI is shaped by multi-dimensional motivations—political, economic, and professional—suggesting that reinstitutionalisation is negotiated across overlapping institutional logics (Deuze, 2009). Political legitimacy, economic survival, and professional identity intersect in shaping how journalism integrates technological change. AI becomes a medium through which journalism continues to align with state imperatives, serve market demands, and assert professional relevance (Suchman, 2023). *Third*, the shared challenges with Western counterparts—such as adapting to platform logics and audience behaviours—suggest that journalism's reinstitutionalisation is part of a transnational field shaped by platform capitalism (Bannerman, 2022). However, whereas Western journalism often contends with declining trust and commercial instability, Chinese journalism adapts within a state-orchestrated information order. These similarities in pressures—but differences in institutional responses—highlight the context-dependent pathways through which reinstitutionalisation unfolds (Wu, 2024). *Fourth*, the insistence on maintaining human oversight functions not merely as a guard against technical failure, but as a safeguard against political liability (Belair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018; Carlson & Lewis, 2015). By ensuring that human editors remain the final arbiters of content, journalism reasserts its gatekeeping role—even as workflows become increasingly automated. This hybrid model of human-machine cooperation constitutes a new institutional norm, embedding AI into existing practices rather than displacing them entirely. *Fifth*, the dual role of critical yet loyal reporting—focusing scrutiny on tech firms while amplifying state narratives—embodies the negotiated boundaries of journalism's reinstitutionalised identity. Journalists maintain professional legitimacy by producing relevant,

critical reporting, but do so within ideologically sanctioned limits (H. Wang & Sparks, 2019). This balance allows journalism to remain institutionally valued, even as its normative functions are reshaped.

In sum, the reinstitutionalisation of journalism in China is marked by strategic accommodation. AI technologies are integrated in ways that reinforce journalism's value to the state, support its professional function, and align with economic imperatives. Rather than displacing the institution, AI becomes a catalyst for rearticulating what journalism is, who it serves, and how it operates in an algorithmically governed media system. Tech companies, while appearing to drive innovation and efficiency, simultaneously reinforce existing institutional hierarchies by aligning with state ideologies and participating in the maintenance of controlled information flows. Through this alignment, journalism is not eroded but reconstituted—serving dual roles: to advance technical modernisation while ensuring ideological conformity. The adoption of AI—underpinned by political expectations—reshapes journalistic practice to prioritise control, compliance, and automation over independence, critique, and pluralism. This transformation does not signal journalistic decline, but rather a repositioning of journalism as a managed institution within China's platformised media ecology. Reinstitutionalisation in the algorithmic age, then, is characterised by the normalisation of human-machine collaboration under politically bounded conditions.

## **4.2 Technology tamed**

The rapid integration of AI into journalism has not only transformed news production and distribution but also reshaped the role of technology companies within the media landscape. In particular, Chinese tech firms have emerged as central actors in this transformation, with their influence extending beyond technological innovation to shaping journalistic practices, institutional relationships, and governance dynamics. This section addresses RQ2a: What role do technology companies play in AI innovation in news production and distribution, particularly in the Chinese context? and RQ2b: How do the institutional logics and practices of technology companies intersect with and potentially challenge traditional journalistic expertise, values, and professional norms? Focusing on both technology developers—especially Chinese tech companies—and the technologies they produce, four key observations emerge: (1) tech companies are driving journalism innovation; (2) the relationship between tech firms and news organisations is increasingly complex, marked by both competition and collaboration; (3) tech companies in China are widely recognised as politically embedded actors; and (4) the technologies developed under these conditions often serve as instruments of automated authority. Together, these findings highlight the institutionalisation of AI and algorithms within the Chinese media system and the entangled co-constitution of journalism, technological infrastructures, and state governance.

### ***4.2.1 Technology companies as engines of journalism innovation***

First, as shown across the articles, Chinese technology companies have become central players in driving journalism innovation, fundamentally reshaping how news is produced, distributed, and monetised. These firms are at the forefront of key developments in areas such as algorithmic content recommendation, automated news writing, AI-driven translation, and content moderation. These innovations do more than enhance traditional journalistic practices—they fundamentally alter the very structure of news production and distribution. For example, Tencent’s newswriting bot, Dreamwriter, is capable of autonomously generating large volumes of financial and sports news (Article IV), while ByteDance’s Jinri Toutiao has pioneered

the use of personalised news feeds, powered by sophisticated algorithmic profiling, that drastically change how users interact with news content (Article III). These innovations signify a broader shift in institutional logic, from traditional editorial gatekeeping to a model of computational personalisation. This shift embeds platform logic—prioritising speed, scalability, and user engagement—within journalistic practices, thus fundamentally changing how news is produced and consumed.

As a result, established journalistic routines are being disrupted, and media organisations find themselves increasingly adapting to platform-driven dynamics. These changes are reflected in broader industry trends, as media outlets focus more on metrics such as engagement and virality rather than traditional editorial judgment (Hartley et al., 2023). In this context, Chinese tech companies wield significant influence over media institutions, not just through their technology but also through their infrastructure. By providing the tools and systems that power news production, these companies are able to export platform logic into the governance structures of the media. This results in what has been termed “infrastructure capture” (Nechushtai, 2018), where news production is shaped by the technical and commercial imperatives of platforms, leading to a shift in both the economics and the practice of journalism. Ultimately, Chinese tech firms are not just enhancing media efficiency—they are recalibrating the very infrastructure of journalism, aligning it with the priorities of platform capitalism, and in doing so, influencing the direction of media governance in profound ways.

#### ***4.2.2 Strategic and complex media-tech company relations***

Second, the relationship between Chinese news organisations and technology companies is neither fully adversarial nor purely cooperative. Instead, it is characterised by strategic partnerships forged under ideological, commercial, and political imperatives. As documented in Articles III and IV, media-tech collaborations often serve mutual legitimisation: media outlets gain access to advanced AI tools, while tech companies enhance their public credibility by aligning with state-sanctioned journalistic institutions. These partnerships have grown in complexity. Tech companies function as collaborators in journalism innovation, offering AI capabilities that boost efficiency and

output. At the same time, they are competitors—vying for audience attention through platform-native content—and subjects of critical journalistic scrutiny. For example, while ByteDance’s algorithmic innovations initially disrupted conventional media practices, it was later compelled to cooperate with news outlets through licensing agreements and profit-sharing models. Similarly, Tencent’s use of AI-generated news had to be tempered through legal and editorial collaboration to retain legitimacy. Additionally, as examined in Article II, tech companies can be the target of journalistic investigation. Such space still remains for China’s critical reporting to increase the state’s legitimacy in determining the future of AI governance and at the same time, keeping the power of platform companies under control. This dynamic reflects a calibrated balance: the state permits selective scrutiny of tech giants, not as a challenge to political authority, but as a means to discipline capital and reassert state primacy in AI governance. In doing so, journalism plays an instrumental yet ambivalent role—it is empowered to speak truth to power within limits, often aligning with state objectives in reining in platform excesses. Journalism in this context retains its institutional role but is recalibrated to support a co-governance model where the state disciplines both media and capital.

#### ***4.2.3 Tech firms as politically embedded actors***

Third, despite the often neutral and progressive portrayal of technology, it is widely understood in the Chinese context that the survival and growth of tech firms are deeply political. Innovation is not merely a technical or market-driven endeavour but one that operates within strict political boundaries (Creemers et al., 2024). Companies must carefully align with shifting regulatory expectations and ideological narratives. Their legitimacy and continuity are contingent upon demonstrating both technological prowess and political loyalty. As such, tech companies are constantly negotiating their position within a state-centric ecosystem where the rules of the game are shaped by political authorities. As discussed in Article III, ByteDance’s shift from a value-neutral discourse (“technology is neutral”) to one that foregrounds political alignment (“technology must embody correct values”) exemplifies this transformation. Regulatory crackdowns on algorithms, copyright, and content moderation further illustrate that

platform power is not left unchecked. For example, ByteDance faced lawsuits and regulatory pressure over copyright infringement, prompting the company to develop revenue-sharing mechanisms with traditional media outlets. These dynamics demonstrate that Chinese tech firms must continuously renegotiate their position within a state-centric ecosystem (Lei, 2023). They are not autonomous innovators disrupting established institutions from the outside, but politically contingent actors whose operations are shaped—and at times curtailed—by the demands of state oversight. As such, their influence in the media and journalism space is not simply a product of technical superiority but of their ability to negotiate and internalise the institutional logics of the party-state.

#### ***4.2.4 Automating authority: Technologies as governance tools***

Finally, technological systems are not just tools of efficiency but are increasingly deployed to automate and consolidate authority in media governance. Examples include AI-generated news anchors that borrow the credibility of human journalists to deliver officially sanctioned information, automated newsbots producing politically safe content at scale, and algorithmic content distribution systems that subtly shape public discourse by privileging ideologically aligned narratives. AI-based moderation further filters content, not only targeting moral deviance (e.g., disgraced celebrities) but also suppressing politically sensitive discourse. In all these cases, AI functions not as a neutral medium but as a mechanism of control—enforcing political boundaries and reinforcing institutional power.

As discussed in Article III, tech giants in China (e.g., Alibaba, Tencent, Baidu) are dominant actors in developing and implementing AI in journalism. These companies are actively collaborating with the Chinese state to further their influence in the information space. For instance, Alibaba developed Xuexi Qiangguo, the CCP’s ideological app, illustrating the “platformisation of propaganda” (Liang et al., 2021). Alibaba is also the company behind Xinhuaazhiyun in collaboration with China’s state-owned Xinhua News Agency. On its official website, Xinhuaazhiyun (*Xinhuaazhiyun*, n.d.) prides itself to be “the only state-controlled communication technology company in China jointly established by central media and Internet giants.” It also has access to

the database of Xinhua, including all textual and visual data that could be/are used to train machine learning models, which could potentially lead to AI-supercharged propaganda (Bolsover & Howard, 2019; Liang et al., 2021). These tools are built on vast media datasets and reflect an emerging institutional logic where AI acts not just as infrastructure but as an enforcer of state-aligned epistemologies.

Chinese journalists interviewed for the study (Article I) expressed gratitude for these journalism innovation tools. One example is an AI content moderation tool, which helps automatically to detect censored words and identify disgraced celebrities or corrupt officials who should no longer appear on screen, as it is difficult for human journalists or editors to keep track of the evolving list of ‘unsafe content.’ They welcome such tools that both assist production and enforce political boundaries. This points to the mutual shaping of AI and journalism in China, where technological advancement is not merely adopted but co-evolves with institutional and political demands. This entrenchment of algorithmic systems in governance roles reflects the institutionalisation of AI as a mechanism of control. Rather than displacing journalists, these systems reconfigure journalistic authority to align with techno-political imperatives—producing a model of journalism that is politically compatible, technologically enhanced, and institutionally controlled.

#### ***4.2.5 Institutionalisation of algorithms and AI***

Taken together, the four observations above collectively illuminate how algorithms and AI are becoming institutionalised in the Chinese journalism field—not merely as technical add-ons, but as embedded socio-political and organisational logics that reshape how journalism is practiced, governed, and legitimised.

First, the central role of technology companies in developing AI-driven innovations—such as automated writing, algorithmic recommendation, and content moderation—reflects how new technological infrastructures are being normalised within journalistic workflows. These technologies do not operate in a vacuum; they bring with them values of efficiency, scalability, personalisation, and monetisation, which increasingly guide editorial decisions and reshape professional routines (Carlson, 2018). As these practices stabilise and are taken for granted, they indicate the institutionalisation of



algorithms (Napoli, 2014) where computational decision-making becomes a core, an expected part of journalism production. Second, the evolving and strategic partnerships between media organisations and tech companies demonstrate how algorithmic systems become organisationally routinised and relationally embedded. Through licensing agreements, co-development of tools, and editorial collaborations, AI systems are no longer external disruptions—they are internalised through negotiated dependencies, where both traditional and emerging actors co-produce the logics of news production (Simon, 2023). This convergence between journalistic and technological institutions reveals how AI becomes an institutional actor, not just a technical one—shaping not only outputs but also inter-organisational relations and field-level dynamics. Third, the political embeddedness of tech companies ensures that algorithmic systems in China are not only commercially but also ideologically institutionalised (Benkler, 2022). State oversight and regulatory mechanisms shape the boundaries of what AI and algorithms are allowed to do—guiding how platforms encode political values, enforce censorship, and align innovation with ideological goals. This tight interweaving of political logic with algorithmic operations shows how the institutionalisation of AI in journalism is co-constituted with authoritarian governance structures. Algorithms in this context are not neutral arbiters of information but become tools of political rationality—part of the state’s extended epistemological and disciplinary apparatus. Fourth, the deployment of AI for content moderation, propaganda dissemination, and automated authority (e.g., news anchors, bots) signals the institutionalisation of algorithmic governance in media (Just & Latzer, 2017). These technologies are not only adopted for operational efficiency but also for reasserting control, disciplining content, and automating compliance. In doing so, they reproduce and extend the state’s normative authority over journalism, while embedding these norms into machinic systems. Journalists’ growing reliance on such tools—for instance, to track censored figures or detect ‘unsafe’ language—illustrates how AI systems have become part of the professional common sense, embedding algorithmic rules into everyday editorial decisions.

Together, these dynamics show that AI and algorithms are no longer experimental, contested, or marginal in Chinese journalism—

they are institutionalised. They are stabilised through: 1) Cognitive frames (AI as innovation, efficiency, political alignment); 2) Organisational routines (automated writing, moderation, and distribution); 3) Regulative mechanisms (licensing, censorship, state scrutiny); and 4) Normative expectations (compliance with platform and political logics). In short, the institutionalisation of algorithms and AI in Chinese journalism represents a broader transformation: from human-centred editorial discretion to hybrid human-machine governance, shaped jointly by platform logics and political authority. This transformation is not neutral—it reconfigures the boundaries of journalistic expertise, shifts power within the media field, and reshapes the production of public knowledge in an AI-mediated information order.

### **4.3 Contextual matters for global AI-mediated information landscape**

RQ3 addresses the role of the state, law, and policy frameworks, particularly in relation to the disruptive effects of AI on journalism. Specifically, RQ3a asks how legal and policy frameworks, particularly copyright law, address the challenges and implications of AI innovation in news production and distribution, while RQ3b examines how these approaches differ across different geopolitical contexts—specifically the US, EU, and China. As explored in Articles IV and V, the integration of AI into journalism has raised significant challenges for existing legal and policy frameworks, particularly copyright law. Traditionally, copyright law has been designed to protect original human-created works, but AI-generated content complicates this by autonomously or semi-autonomously producing content. This section 1) details how disruption has forced legal systems to adapt, rethinking how intellectual property should be defined and protected in the context of AI-driven media; 2) reveals how regulatory approaches differ across geopolitical contexts, 3) examines the profound implications for journalism institutions and AI governance. It ends with a reflection on the what viewing the state, law, and regulation through a neo-institutionalist lens has to offer.

#### ***4.3.1 Copyright and AI: A global shift in legal definitions***

One of the primary ways copyright law addresses AI's influences is through the redefinition of what constitutes a “work” eligible for copyright protection. As discussed in Article V, in all the contexts, the question arises: should AI-generated works be recognised as eligible for protection, and if so, who owns the copyright—the AI system itself, the programmer, or the organisation that deployed the AI? In the US, the Copyright Office has declined to grant protection to AI-generated works that lack human authorship, citing the necessity for a human creator in copyright law. In contrast, the EU has started exploring more flexible approaches, including the potential to separate authorship and ownership, on the assumption that AI-generated content could be seen as part of the evolving media ecosystem. In China, the state is actively shaping the direction of AI regulation through legislative efforts. The Chinese government has recognised the importance of AI in shaping the future of media but has also sought to use its regulatory control over

copyright law to maintain ideological oversight. As discussed in Article IV, the revised Chinese copyright law prioritises state interests by ensuring that content generated by AI systems can be controlled by state-approved organisations rather than individual creators. The law grants stronger protections to media organisations, aligning with the state’s desire to regulate content and maintain a tight grip on the narrative. This approach allows the state to exercise greater influence over the distribution of AI-generated content, while restricting journalistic independence and protecting politically aligned content.

As discussed in Article V, copyright policymaking has broader implications beyond newsrooms; it influences the distribution of power throughout the media system (Bannerman, 2022). It is also a battleground for different normative ideals about AI and can either enable or constrain AI development. The findings suggest a need for more caution in the rhetoric surrounding copyright, urging policymakers not to regard copyright law as an incontestable right (Klein et al., 2015). Copyright law is often shaped by large corporations or the state, reflecting the power dynamics within institutional arrangements. The analysis underscores the importance of broadening regulatory imagination and exercising more inclusiveness and prudence during policymaking and legislation.

#### ***4.3.2 Networked governance in a global context***

As illustrated in Articles III, IV and V, the Chinese government has mastered the art of using “rule of law” to enhance its governance and control over the media and technology. While taking inspiration from other jurisdictions, such as EU’s GDPR, China’s regulatory frameworks emphasise political alignment, state security and national interests, as seen in the Cybersecurity Law (2017), the Data Security Law (2021), and the Personal Information Protection Law (2021), which focus more on state surveillance and control over data flows. It tightly weaves a net of laws and regulations to maintain legitimacy while simultaneously leaving room for strategic interpretations and adjustments. This enables the government to adapt its regulatory framework as needed while ensuring a tight grip on the media landscape. The legal system in China is thus not a strict, one-size-fits-all approach but a flexible tool that allows the state to exercise control over both AI technologies and media content. In this way, the state can align its political interests with

legal structures, offering itself legitimacy while selectively enforcing laws to maintain a firm grip on the flow of information (Kokas, 2023; Lei, 2023; Repnikova, 2017).

As briefly discussed in Article V, in the EU, regulators have attempted to set a global standard for AI governance, notably with the “Brussels Effect” aimed at creating comprehensive regulations, such as the EU AI Act, which can influence global practices. Additionally, data privacy regulations such as the GDPR have created constraints on how AI-driven news platforms can collect, use, and distribute user data. AI tools that curate personalised news feeds or produce algorithmically generated content are bound by strict rules on data consent and user privacy. The Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Act aim to regulate tech platforms and algorithmic transparency, demanding that platforms provide greater accountability for how AI algorithms recommend content. While the EU’s efforts to regulate AI in journalism and media are admirable, the approach has often backfired, leading to unintended harm to smaller organisations that lack the resources to meet compliance demands or negotiate with powerful platforms. The EU’s regulation-heavy model doesn’t always account for the realities of media diversity and technological innovation, raising concerns about market balance, industry growth, and utility for democratic goals (Piasecki et al., 2024; Quintais, 2019; Seipp et al., 2023).

In the US, the regulatory approach to AI in journalism is predominantly *laissez-faire*, with minimal government intervention. This market-driven model has led to significant innovation, enabling new forms of content creation and distribution. However, it has also given rise to monopolistic practices, concentrating media power within a few tech giants. This concentration has raised concerns over the unchecked spread of disinformation and the influence of these companies over public discourse. The lack of robust regulatory frameworks also means that critical issues such as copyright, data privacy, and platform accountability remain largely unaddressed. This absence of oversight allows the market to dictate the future of AI in journalism, often prioritising corporate interests over public values. As a result, journalistic integrity, ethical standards, and autonomy is increasingly undermined. The absence of regulation risks exacerbating power imbalances, making it more difficult for independent media

organisations to compete while reinforcing the dominance of large tech companies (Napoli, 2023; Pickard, 2020; Reese, 2021).

Taken together, the study shows that the state, in its regulatory role, must be seen not as a neutral arbitrator but as a political actor with its own interests, which are often shaped by economic and ideological factors (Bareis & Katzenbach, 2022; Kokas, 2023; Stockmann, 2023). In this context, the regulation of AI technologies—including those used in journalism—is deeply entwined with broader struggles over control, wealth distribution, and the flow of information. The lens of neo-institutionalism’s concept of institutional isomorphism helps explain policy convergence across jurisdictions, especially under uncertainty or normative pressure. For instance, GDPR-like data policies or EU-style AI regulation models are being adopted or adapted globally, often in response to perceived legitimacy rather than functional superiority. This shows how law travels through normative imitation (mimetic isomorphism), professional consensus (normative), or coercive pressure (e.g., trade or market incentives). It shows that law and policy help stabilise emerging institutional orders but often reflect dominant (usually Global North) paradigms unless actively contested. The lens of critical political economy helps us understand that the laws and policies governing AI are not simply technical frameworks but are deeply political and economic in nature. They reflect that the interests of powerful actors—be it the state, large corporations, or erratic tech or political personalities with considerable public power—can influence regulatory outcomes to their benefit, potentially undermining democratic ideals such as media plurality, journalistic autonomy, and informed citizenship. Understanding the broader political, economic, and cultural context is crucial for assessing the implications of AI regulation and its potential impact on democracy, journalism, and the public sphere. Without careful attention to these contextual factors, the regulation of AI could reinforce existing power imbalances and undermine the public interest in media diversity and journalistic independence.

#### ***4.3.3 The role of law and policy in the erosion of journalistic autonomy***

As shown in Articles III, IV and V, AI’s influence on news production has raised profound challenges for the protection of news content,

highlighting the deeper issue of how technology defines the subject matter of copyright—in this case, news. The findings suggest that AI’s challenge to news copyright represents a new phase in the longstanding debate about how to protect news (Picard, 2015; Tworek, 2015). Under a weakened copyright institution, algorithms act as a catalyst for the deinstitutionalisation of journalism, widening the power imbalance between journalism on the one hand and the state and tech companies on the other. Laws often prioritise and reinforce the positions of the state, investors, and tech industries, diminishing the role of journalism as a central actor in institutional arrangements (Cohen, 2019). This situation is exacerbated by newsrooms’ eager embrace of AI innovation, which is often done without a clear articulation of journalistic norms or an understanding of the roles and functions of journalism (Min & Fink, 2021). Combined with the rapid development of AI technologies in unregulated areas, this has created a “Wild West” of failed regulatory attempts, leaving journalism’s long-term autonomy under serious threat. As the findings suggest, this is not just a technological problem or just a business problem but rather a policy problem (Picard, 2014; Pickard, 2020).

Findings of this research resonate with many current studies in journalism, which shows that across China, the EU, and the US, AI’s integration into journalism has shifted power dynamics that undermine journalistic autonomy (Carlson, 2018; Napoli, 2014; Nielsen & Ganter, 2022; Örnebring & Karlsson, 2022; Poell et al., 2022; Simon, 2022). As shown in Articles IV and V, the state’s tight control over AI and media content in China through legislation, policymaking and regulation practices, severely limits journalistic independence, requiring journalists to conform to state-approved narratives. In the EU, although regulatory efforts aim to balance innovation with democratic values, unintended consequences have harmed smaller media organisations, consolidating power in the hands of larger players and undermining diversity (Quintais, 2019). In the US, a market-driven approach led to a policy silence (Freedman, 2010) which might have fostered innovation but compromised journalistic integrity and accountability, as tech companies wield significant control over news distribution and curation. While the challenges differ across regions, the overarching trend is clear: AI is reshaping the media landscape in ways that frequently erode journalistic autonomy. Whether through

state control, regulatory overreach, or market concentration because of policy vacuum, the growing power of technology companies increasingly constrains journalists.

From a neo-institutionalist perspective, law and policy function as scripts that formalise acceptable practices and norms. They shape what is deemed legitimate, desirable, or rational within the media and tech fields. For example, AI copyright rules or algorithmic transparency laws encode specific understandings of authorship, responsibility, and innovation. These legal frameworks do not just constrain action—they actively constitute fields, influencing how actors (journalists, developers, platforms) see themselves and their roles. Legal regimes are not just neutral tools; they institutionalise particular visions of AI and journalism (e.g., techno-solutionism vs. public-interest frameworks). Law and policy can also serve as mechanisms of legitimation in moments of institutional instability or transformation—such as the disruption caused by AI in journalism. Legal reforms may seek to re-legitimise journalism’s social role by affirming public service mandates, reinforcing ethical standards, or supporting platform accountability. Conversely, poorly designed laws can legitimise algorithmic capture by embedding commercial logics (e.g., copyright regimes favouring tech firms over journalists). It shows that law and policy can be, are, and should be part of the symbolic and material scaffolding that helps institutions like journalism to maintain legitimacy in the face of technological disruption.

#### ***4.3.4 A dialectical view on state, law, and policy as institutions***

If we understand the state not merely as a set of actors or government bodies but as an institution with its own embedded logics, routines, and symbolic power, we can better analyse how it shapes—and is reshaped by—the rise of AI in journalism. The state, like law and policy, is a historically constituted and socially embedded institution. It codifies legitimacy, authorises particular norms, and arbitrates conflicts through both material regulation and symbolic classification (Clemens & Lu, 2020). Its role in AI governance is not only operational but deeply normative: it defines what counts as innovation, security, public interest, and harm (Bareis & Katzenbach, 2022). In liberal democracies, the institutional state often presents itself as a neutral arbiter,



regulating the excesses of market-driven tech. But as the analysis shows, it frequently operates through institutionalised entanglements with corporate interests, enacting policy that stabilises rather than disrupts platform dominance. In China, the state’s institutional logic centres on political control, technological self-reliance, and national rejuvenation, shaping AI development as a sovereign project that intertwines media, tech, and ideology. In both cases, the state plays a key role in scripting the sociotechnical imaginaries that legitimise AI adoption—whether through innovation discourse, regulatory experimentation, or techno-nationalist ambitions. Thus, the future of journalism in the AI era hinges not only on technological trajectories or legal responses but also on how state institutions evolve—and are contested—across different political systems. Will the state reinforce concentrated power and instrumentalise media, or can it be reconfigured to uphold pluralism, equity, and the public good? This question underscores the need for cross-contextual, institutionally grounded frameworks to rethink journalism’s role in algorithmic societies (Veale et al., 2023).

In the meantime, it is essential to understand law and policy not merely as instruments of regulation but as institutions in their own right—socially constructed systems of rules, norms, and meanings that stabilise expectations, legitimate authority, and channel power (Bannerman & Haggart, 2015; La Torre & La Torre, 2010; MacCormick, 2007). From a neo-institutionalist perspective, legal and policy frameworks are not neutral or static; they are historically situated, politically contested, and ideologically infused. They reflect and reproduce dominant institutional logics—whether market efficiency, state sovereignty, or technological solutionism—while shaping how actors imagine what is possible and desirable in the AI era. This framing sheds light on why attempts to “govern” AI often fail to disrupt entrenched power asymmetries: law and policy, as institutions, are themselves embedded in the very political-economic systems they seek to regulate. For example, copyright law privileges authorship and originality in ways that legitimise platform-led AI content production, reinforcing corporate dominance over cultural production. Similarly, AI ethics policies and algorithmic transparency initiatives often reflect a ritualistic isomorphism—borrowed templates that provide a veneer of accountability without redistributing power or challenging

institutional logics of surveillance capitalism or state control. Viewing law and policy as institutions also reveals their dual character: they can both constrain and enable. On the one hand, they entrench existing power hierarchies; on the other, they can be sites of contestation, where marginalised actors—journalists, public interest advocates, civil society—can challenge dominant narratives and push for more inclusive, democratic norms. This tension opens up possibilities for re-institutionalising journalism in ways that prioritise public values, protect editorial autonomy, and imagine governance models that transcend extractive or authoritarian logics.

All in all, the state can be regarded as meta-institution as the state is the primary legitimising force behind institutions of law and policy. It doesn't just enforce regulation; it constitutes the boundaries of what can be regulated and defines what counts as "legal", "ethical", or "in the public interest." Through its bureaucracies, courts, ministries, and rhetoric, the state institutionalises particular visions of modernity, risk, and value—and does so differently in authoritarian and democratic contexts. Meanwhile, law and policy are not merely tools; they are institutional scripts that are normative and symbolic frameworks that encode societal values and reproduce institutional logics (Coleman & Perl, 1999, 1999). In the AI context, copyright law, data governance, and media policy are sites where competing institutional agendas—state sovereignty, corporate profitability, journalistic autonomy—are negotiated and encoded. Regulation is also this institutional process, the mechanism through which the state and law exert influence. Regulation is never neutral but always an arena of struggle. It is shaped by institutionalised interests, lobbying networks, legal precedent, political ideologies, and administrative routines. It also reflects path dependencies—how past decisions structure current possibilities—and institutional isomorphism, where different regimes adopt similar regulatory forms for legitimacy.

Viewing the state, law, and regulation through a neo-institutionalist lens foregrounds their mutually constitutive and recursive nature (Clemens & Lu, 2020; Katzenbach, 2018; Meese & Bannerman, 2022). The dissertation shows that the state uses law and policy to enact regulation but also that law and regulation shape the institutional identity of the state itself. Their relationships are recursively linked: the state enacts law and regulation, which in turn

reshape the state's role, legitimacy, and authority in the governance of AI and journalism. This recursive, embedded relationship helps move beyond instrumentalist views of regulation (“What policies should we implement?”) and instead asks: What institutional logics are these policies reinforcing? Whose imaginaries of AI and journalism are being legitimised? How do laws shape not just behaviour, but meaning, identity, and power? In the governance of AI and journalism, this perspective allows us to see how different political systems embed diverging imaginaries, development priorities, and accountability mechanisms into their institutional infrastructures. It also prompts critical reflection on how existing regulatory approaches may perpetuate entrenched power asymmetries or reproduce institutional isomorphisms in the name of progress (Cohen, 2019). Ultimately, understanding these interdependencies is essential to designing AI governance frameworks that are not only technologically robust, but democratically legitimate and socially responsive.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

---

### 5.1 Overall summary

This research investigates the complex and evolving interplay between journalism, technology, and the state in the algorithmic age, using Global China as a critical lens. The findings demonstrate that AI and algorithmic systems are not merely tools of efficiency but catalysts of institutional transformation. Across all five articles, journalism is shown to be undergoing a process of reinstitutionalisation in China, where traditional roles, values, and power structures are being recalibrated in response to shifting technological, political, and legal dynamics.

Chinese news organisations, all state-affiliated, adopt AI primarily for cost-cutting and efficiency gains, reflecting both economic imperatives and national strategies tied to China's ambition of becoming an AI superpower. These adoptions are not politically neutral: they take place within a governance structure that increasingly centralises ideological control. While journalists continue to produce critical content, their work remains circumscribed by the boundaries of political acceptability, aligning professional norms with state narratives. AI technologies, co-developed by powerful tech firms like ByteDance and Tencent, serve dual functions—as tools of innovation and as instruments of ideological governance. Regulatory mechanisms and evolving copyright laws further entrench the state's authority, favouring institutional and technological actors over individual journalists and traditional journalistic values. This technological reordering of journalism illustrates a convergence of institutional logics. Initially, tech companies mimicked journalistic norms (Hinings et al., 2018)—valuing relevance and timeliness—but have since been subjected to coercive isomorphism, aligning with state goals and socialist core values under regulatory pressure. Journalism, meanwhile, preserves a semblance of normative legitimacy by adapting to these constraints, blending professional routines with political obedience (Zheng et al., 2010). The result is a system in which AI reinforces journalism's function as a state-aligned institution rather than a fully autonomous public watchdog.

Articles I and II highlight how Chinese media coverage of AI technologies embodies a technocratic and celebratory tone, prioritising

national progress over critical reflection. In Article III, Jinri Toutiao serves as a case study of institutional hybridisation: a platform that balances commercial logics with regulatory compliance, demonstrating the tensions and trade-offs in maintaining legitimacy across competing institutional spheres. Article IV reveals how legal frameworks, particularly copyright law, increasingly favour the rights of tech companies, eroding journalistic authorship and weakening journalism's institutional autonomy. Beyond the Chinese context, the comparative analysis with the US and EU in Article V illustrates global challenges in governing AI-driven media environments. Each region reflects a different governance logic—state-centric in China, rights-based in the EU, and market-driven in the US—yet all struggle with legal, ethical, and institutional gaps. Copyright regimes, algorithmic accountability, and data privacy laws remain ill-equipped to address the pace and complexity of technological change, undermining journalism's democratic function worldwide.

Overall, this study argues that AI and algorithmic systems are fundamentally reshaping journalism by redistributing power, redefining institutional boundaries, and reconfiguring governance. While journalism in China retains structural stability, its logics are increasingly subsumed under political and technological imperatives. The reinstitutionalisation of journalism in the algorithmic age is marked not by rupture but by a managed transformation—where innovation, legitimacy, and control converge. As these forces continue to evolve, urgent questions remain about how journalism can preserve its public role, ethical standards, and institutional autonomy in an era increasingly dominated by AI-driven logic and state–platform convergence.

## **5.2 Limitations and avenues for future research**

This PhD dissertation addresses multiple dimensions of the evolving relationship between AI and journalism, yet it is inevitable that not all aspects could be explored within the scope of this project. Before outlining the key contributions, it is important to reflect on the study's limitations and identify promising directions for future research that emerged during this scholarly journey.

First, the empirical scope of the dissertation is geographically concentrated on China. While this focus offers valuable insights into a pivotal global player in both AI development and media governance, the findings may not be readily generalisable to contexts with less centralised political structures or differing levels of technological infrastructure. Furthermore, as the analysis reveals, Chinese newsrooms themselves are heterogeneous, and other relevant actors—such as AI developers, data brokers, or regulatory bodies—could offer equally important perspectives. While the case study of Jinri Toutiao sheds light on platform-driven news distribution and algorithmic governance, its singular focus limits broader applicability. Comparative analysis across platforms with different operational models, such as WeChat, Baidu, or emerging LLM-powered search engines and AI chatbots, could reveal alternative patterns of interaction between AI and journalism.

In addition, the dissertation does not fully engage with the material infrastructure underpinning the AI ecosystem. Future research could extend into the materialist dimensions of AI-mediated journalism by interrogating the roles of data flows, network architectures, and hardware in shaping journalistic practices. Legal and policy dimensions also warrant deeper exploration. While this study examines copyright law as a central institutional force, other regulatory frameworks—such as privacy protections, data governance, antitrust policy, and international trade regulations—could provide alternative lenses to understand how state power, corporate interest, and journalistic autonomy intersect. Expanding the empirical terrain to include additional platforms, legal regimes, and under-researched regions—such as Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia—would contribute to a more globally inclusive understanding of AI's implications for journalism. Longitudinal studies are also needed to

capture the evolving nature of institutional responses, platform strategies, and journalistic adaptation over time.

Second, the methodological design of this dissertation leans toward qualitative approaches, including case studies, document analysis, and content analysis. These methods enable rich, contextualised understandings of institutional dynamics but are less suited to capturing large-scale trends or determining causal relationships. Due to constraints in access, time, and resources, the study does not employ experimental or participatory methodologies. Future research could benefit from a mixed-methods design that integrates qualitative insights with quantitative surveys, computational text analysis, or large-scale data analytics of algorithmic behaviours. Experimental studies could be used to test how different AI applications impact journalistic outputs, audience engagement, or editorial decisions. Furthermore, participatory research involving journalists, technologists, and policymakers could facilitate the co-creation of frameworks for ethical and sustainable AI implementation in journalism—especially in contexts more conducive to collaborative inquiry.

Third, although the dissertation focuses on institutional, technological, and regulatory transformations, the role of audiences remains underexplored. The lack of audience-centred analysis limits the understanding of how news consumers perceive, interpret, and interact with AI-driven journalism. It also leaves unaddressed the socio-cultural implications of algorithmic news—such as its effects on trust in journalism, media literacy, or the amplification of digital inequalities. Future research should investigate how diverse audiences experience algorithmically mediated news, how they understand the role of AI in shaping information flows, and what expectations or concerns they have regarding the use of AI in the media. This line of inquiry is particularly important in examining how AI might exacerbate or alleviate issues related to audience segmentation, filter bubbles, and inclusivity in media systems.

In summary, while this dissertation contributes a significant institutional perspective to the growing body of scholarship on AI and journalism, it also opens the door for a range of empirical, methodological, and theoretical pathways for future investigation. Addressing these limitations through broader geographic coverage,

mixed-methods approaches, audience-focused research, and interdisciplinary collaborations will be essential in building a more comprehensive understanding of journalism's transformation in the algorithmic age.



## **5.3 Contributions and implications**

### ***5.3.1 Empirical contributions: Chinese case, global implications***

The articles collectively provide an in-depth exploration of the institutional interplay in relation to AI in journalism in China and globally, offering case-specific and cross-regional insights (Liu & Su, 2021). It draws on five interrelated studies that examine different layers of this interplay, ranging from newsroom practices and media coverage of AI to the role of algorithmic distribution and the regulatory shifts in copyright law. It brings to the fore the often-neglected roles of laws and policies to correct this blindspot in media and communication studies (Cohen, 2019). It also points to the importance of a context-aware and interdisciplinary approach and examining actors outside of newsrooms when conducting journalism research (Örnebring & Karlsson, 2022).

The empirical findings from interviews with journalists and content analyses of AI-related journalism reveal the tensions journalists face in covering AI: balancing optimism about technological innovation with concerns about its societal and professional disruptions. This highlights the renegotiation of journalistic roles as AI increasingly influences news production and dissemination (Schapals & Porlezza, 2020). By focusing on algorithmic news distribution in China (e.g., Jinri Toutiao), the research illuminates how platforms mediate between commercial priorities and state-imposed ideological control. This dual role reflects a broader trend of tech companies acting as both innovators and enforcers of government narratives. The tracing of the platform's evolution offers a longitudinal perspective and provides a clear timeline of the shifting power dynamics. The research also documents the impacts of regulatory frameworks, particularly Chinese copyright law, which privileges AI-generated content created by tech companies. This empirical evidence showcases how legal systems can disrupt journalistic institutions by redefining traditional notions of authorship and intellectual property. It further employs the historical perspective in exploring the mechanism underlying the institutional interplay and traces the strengthening and weakening of the institutions over time. A comparative lens expands these insights globally, contrasting the legal and regulatory approaches of China, the US, and the EU. This analysis highlights the importance of the legal

construction of the information age and provides a broader understanding of how different governance models shape the institutional landscape of journalism in the age of AI (Cohen, 2019; Latzer & Just, 2020).

Together, the articles offer a comprehensive empirical picture of the interplay between AI, journalism, and governance, emphasising the complex and often contradictory dynamics at work in China while placing them in a global context.

### ***5.3.2 Methodological contributions: Interdisciplinarity and contextuality***

The articles collectively utilise a comprehensive, context-aware, and interdisciplinary approach that combines micro, meso, and macro perspectives, laying the groundwork for future research on AI and journalism.

Interviews with journalists and content analyses of AI-related journalistic coverage offer systematic frameworks for evaluating how journalists engage with and portray disruptive technologies. These methods are adaptable for studying other regions or technological phenomena. Case studies of algorithmic platforms, such as Jinri Toutiao, provide a detailed understanding of how technological systems function within specific sociopolitical and cultural contexts. This approach, particularly when viewed from a longitudinal perspective, serves as a model for examining similar platforms in other contexts. A unique contribution of the study is its inclusion of the often-overlooked roles of laws and policies, as well as a comparative approach within media and communication studies (Rhodes & Marsh, 1992). Comparative analyses of legal frameworks across China, the US, and the EU underscore the importance of interdisciplinary approaches that integrate media studies with legal and governance scholarship. This methodology enables a cross-contextual understanding of how laws and policies influence journalistic practices and institutions (Liu & Su, 2021; Pickard, 2020). The interdisciplinary nature of the research—drawing from journalism, technology, law, and political communication—provides a comprehensive framework for examining the multifaceted impacts of AI on society.

The methodological diversity across these articles provides a model with adaptable tools for studying the evolving relationship

between AI and journalism, ensuring their relevance across varied cultural, legal, and technological contexts.

### ***5.3.3 Theoretical contributions: Capturing shifting power dynamics in the AI era***

The synthesis of the articles in this dissertation advances multiple theoretical frameworks at the intersection of journalism, technology, and governance. A central contribution lies in capturing the shifting power dynamics in the age of AI and in rethinking institutional change in journalism beyond the Western liberal-democratic paradigm.

A key theoretical contribution concerns the renegotiation of journalistic roles in the algorithmic age. AI and automation push journalists into hybrid roles—simultaneously advocates of innovation and critical watchdogs. This duality underscores the tension between professional autonomy and external pressures in a rapidly transforming media environment (Hallin & Mancini, 2011; Mellado, 2021). This renegotiation involves how journalists perceive, articulate, and enact their societal functions in the face of technological advancements and shifting power dynamics. It points to the importance of accounting for power relations when conceptualising journalistic roles, especially in authoritarian contexts, such as China. The research on journalistic role also contributes theoretically by linking the concepts of algorithmic imaginaries (Bucher, 2017) on the individual level to sociotechnical imaginaries (Jasanoff, 2015) on a more collective level to understand the social construction of AI through media. It argues for more nuanced theorising of journalistic roles in non-Western contexts, considering not only personal perceptions and experiences but also the interplay of state and market forces in strategic areas like AI.

This dissertation advances a neo-institutionalist theoretical framework to reconceptualise journalism, algorithms and AI, the state, and law and policy not as static entities or discrete actors, but as dynamic, interrelated institutions (Bannerman & Haggart, 2015; Just & Latzer, 2022; Katzenbach, 2018; Örnebring & Karlsson, 2022; Reese, 2022). Each of these domains is treated as a site of patterned behaviour, norm-setting, and meaning-making, embedded within larger sociotechnical and political contexts. Journalism, for instance, is not only a profession or a set of practices but an institution whose norms,

roles, and public functions are being reconfigured in response to algorithmic logics and automated processes. Algorithms and AI are likewise theorised as emergent institutions—symbolically loaded, rule-based systems that embody particular values, visions of the future, and governance rationalities. Law and policy, rather than being neutral tools, are positioned as institutional scripts that solidify dominant interests and articulate the legitimate boundaries of action and innovation. The state, in turn, is not merely a regulator or policymaker, but an institutional actor whose authority is continuously co-produced through legal systems, political strategies, and its alignment with market and technological agendas. By treating these domains as institutions with their own logics, inertia, and mechanisms of change, this dissertation foregrounds the complex interplay of structure and agency in shaping the governance of AI in journalism. It offers a conceptual vocabulary to analyse how these institutions negotiate legitimacy, resist or adapt to change, and co-evolve amid shifting power dynamics in the digital age.

In particular, a central theme is the conceptualisation of algorithms and AI as institutions (Just & Latzer, 2022; Katzenbach, 2012; Latzer & Just, 2020; Napoli, 2014), highlighting its role as cultural and political actors. Algorithms and AI are not just technical systems; they embody values, priorities, and power structures that influence public discourse and governance. This framing highlights how technological systems can mediate between innovation and control, particularly in authoritarian contexts like China. An institutional perspective on algorithms and AI necessitates examining the legal, social, political, economic, and cultural foundations shaping the values and norms that guide their development as new institutions. Addressing the legitimacy and functionality of algorithms and AI as institutions calls for a bold and holistic approach to technology regulation (Bannerman & Haggart, 2015; Just & Latzer, 2022). Achieving effective governance may require rethinking the digital media ecosystem and its underlying economic and legal frameworks (Cohen, 2019; Just & Latzer, 2022). This is essential, as all forms of power must be held accountable—whether political, economic, governmental, or algorithmic.

The dissertation also challenges traditional notions of authorship and intellectual property by showing how AI-driven content

creation destabilises established norms. The prioritisation of AI-generated content in copyright frameworks reveals how legal systems can reinforce corporate power and disrupt journalistic institutions (Ananny & Kreiss, 2011; Trapova & Mezei, 2022). The analysis revealed how copyright's legal preconditions influence not only newsroom dynamics but also the broader distribution of power across the media system (Bannerman, 2022; Cohen, 2019). Copyright policymaking serves as a contested arena where competing visions of AI emerge, shaping or restricting the conditions for technological innovation. The findings call for greater caution in embracing copyright rhetoric, emphasising that it should not be treated as an unquestionable, inherent right. Instead, copyright laws and their application are often dictated by dominant actors, such as large corporations, the state, or prevailing institutional powers (Ananny & Kreiss, 2011). This underscores the need for a more inclusive and imaginative approach to regulation, ensuring prudence and broader participation in policymaking and legislative processes (Pickard, 2020).

The dissertation offers a critical political economy of communication critique outside of liberal democratic frameworks and teases out the shifting power dynamics in the AI era while engaging with the ontological politics of AI. The explicit consideration of the Chinese political system and state-media dynamics moves beyond a purely technological or individualistic view to consider how national strategies and political objectives drive AI innovation and regulation in the media sector (B. Meng, 2018; Zhao, 2012). The consideration of the increasing power of digital platform companies in cultural production emphasises how economic, governmental, and infrastructural extensions of digital platforms fundamentally affect the operations of cultural industries, including news (Ananny, 2023; Simon, 2022). The analysis of the interplay between state interests and private enterprises helps to illuminate how economic actors operate within and are influenced by the political landscape, shaping the information space (Creemers et al., 2024; Stockmann, 2013).

At a global level, the comparative analysis of governance models advances the theoretical understanding of how different societies negotiate the balance between innovation, regulation, and democratic accountability. Adopting a context-sensitive and comparative approach in an international setting emphasises the importance of

contextual factors in inter-institutional negotiations and recognises the diversity of communicative practices worldwide (Franceschini & Loubere, 2022; Liu & Su, 2021). Such analysis underscores the necessity for all stakeholders to collaborate to ensure that the benefits of AI are equitably shared, leaving no one behind (Verdegem, 2021, 2024), and highlights the importance of the democratisation of AI governance. It also calls for greater clarity and explicitness from all actors about what journalism can and should represent, fostering a shared understanding that transcends institutional boundaries (Karlsson et al., 2023). This is especially crucial as the liberal democratic role of journalism cannot be assumed to sustain itself without deliberate effort. This theoretical lens broadens discussions about media governance and its implications for the future of journalism.

Together, these theoretical insights bridge gaps between journalism studies, media industry studies, technology studies, policy studies, legal theory, and political communication, offering new ways to understand the intersections of AI, media, and governance. They collectively emphasise the importance of considering the specific political, cultural, and economic contexts when analysing the adoption and impact of AI in journalism, challenging Western-centric perspectives and calling for more nuanced theoretical development. They also underscore the dynamic power relations between various institutions, including the state, tech companies, and journalism, in shaping the development and regulation of AI and its implications for the future of news.

#### **5.4 After AI, what?**

After a couple of visits to China during the 1970s, communication scholar Dallas Smythe penned some notes and articles that were never published during his lifetime. Among them, Smythe asked the question “After Bicycles, What?” (Smythe, 1994). At the time, Smythe was concerned about which path the country with 800 million people would choose, noting that “there is no socialist road in Western capitalist technological development,” and that “to adopt capitalist luxury goods such as private automobiles, family-sized washing machines, family-sized refrigerators, one-way TV, etc. for Chinese production would be to equip Chinese families with that many educational instruments leading to the capitalist cultural road” (Smythe, 1994, p. 231). Three decades later, reflecting on the developmental question Smythe posed to China, Zhao Yuezhi penned “After Mobile Phones, What?” (Zhao, 2007), acutely pointing out how the rapid expansion of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in China had boosted the nation’s global economic power and advanced its technonationalist agenda, but has also exacerbated social inequalities and stifled democratic participation and autonomous social organisation. Zhao stressed that the development values underlying all of them need to be analysed within concrete political, economic, social and cultural contexts and the issues of “the nature of the political decision-making process, the setting of development priorities, the ordering of social relations, as well as the value orientations of technological innovations, remain as relevant as ever” (Zhao, 2007, p. 113).

As this dissertation has shown, the rise of AI brings into sharp focus the growing concentration of power in the hands of a few tech giants and state actors, who now exert disproportionate control over the flow of information and public discourse. AI’s influence on journalism is not just a matter of technological innovation; it is an extension of broader structural forces that privilege commercial interests and political agendas over other crucial areas of human creativity, emotional well-being, and democratic ideals of transparency, diversity, accountability, and equality (Broussard, 2018; Crawford, 2021; Pasquale, 2015). The shift towards algorithmic journalism is part of a larger trend in which media institutions are increasingly subordinated to economic imperatives of profit maximisation and state

regulation (Long & Shao, 2021; Simon, 2022; H. Wang & Sparks, 2019). As algorithms continue to shape both the production and consumption of news, we must ask: Who benefits from this transformation? Who holds the power to shape narratives and control information? What does it mean for journalistic autonomy, and how can we ensure that journalism serves the public interest rather than corporate or governmental priorities? Before we consider how to align AI's values with our own, we must first examine, reflect upon, and articulate what our values truly are (Ananny, 2023; Brown et al., 2021; Helberger et al., 2022). The future of journalism in the AI era is not predetermined; it will be shaped by ongoing struggles over meaning, legitimacy, authority, and governance. As this dissertation has shown, the key to understanding the trajectory of AI in journalism lies in recognising the deep intersections between media, technology, politics, law and policy, and economics. After AI, the challenge will be to navigate these intersections in ways that foster a healthy informational space, empower public interest journalism, promote an informed citizenry, build trust and respect among people and communities, and cultivate human solidarity (Cohen, 2019; Couldry, 2025; Karlsson et al., 2023). Only then can we share the benefits that AI brings in a fair and dignified way to an increasingly algorithm-driven world.



## 6. References

---

- Ananny, M. (2013). Press-public collaboration as infrastructure: Tracing news organizations and programming publics in application programming interfaces. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57(5), 623–642.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764212469363>
- Ananny, M. (2016). Toward an ethics of algorithms: Convening, observation, probability, and timeliness. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 41(1), 93–117.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0162243915606523>
- Ananny, M. (2023). What a “platform press” view has to offer. *Digital Journalism*, 11(8), 1568–1575.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2023.2257768>
- Ananny, M. (2024). Making generative artificial intelligence a public problem: Seeing publics and sociotechnical problem-making in three scenes of AI failure. *Javnost - The Public*, 31(1), 89–105.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2024.2319000>
- Ananny, M., & Karr, J. (2025). How media unions stabilize technological hype: Tracing organized journalism’s discursive constructions of generative artificial intelligence. *Digital Journalism*. Advance online publication.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2025.2454516>

- Ananny, M., & Kreiss, D. (2011). A new contract for the press: Copyright, public domain journalism, and self-governance in a digital age. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 28(4), 314–333. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2010.519339>
- Anckar, C. (2008). On the applicability of the most similar systems design and the most different systems design in comparative research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11(5), 389–401. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570701401552>
- Anderson, C. (2013). Towards a sociology of computational and algorithmic journalism. *New Media & Society*, 15(7), 1005–1021. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444812465137>
- Appelgren, E. (2023). The no-go zone of journalism studies—revisiting the concept of technological determinism. *Digital Journalism*, 11(4), 672–690. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2023.2188472>
- Bannerman, S. (2022). Platform imperialism, communications law and relational sovereignty. *New Media & Society*, 26(4), 1816–1833. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221077284>
- Bannerman, S., & Haggart, B. (2015). Historical institutionalism in communication studies. *Communication Theory*, 25(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12051>

- Bareis, J., & Katzenbach, C. (2022). Talking AI into being: The narratives and imaginaries of national AI strategies and their performative politics. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 47(5), 855–881. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01622439211030007>
- Belair-Gagnon, V., & Holton, A. E. (2018). Boundary work, interloper media, and analytics in newsrooms: An analysis of the roles of web analytics companies in news production. *Digital Journalism*, 6(4), 492–508. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2018.1445001>
- Benkler, Y. (2022). Power and productivity: Institutions, ideology, and technology in political economy. In D. Allen, Y. Benkler, L. Downey, R. Henderson, & J. Simons (Eds.), *A Political Economy of Justice* (pp. 27–60). University of Chicago Press. <https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.7208/chicago/9780226818436-002/pdf?licenseType=restricted>
- Boczkowski, P. J. (2005). *Digitizing the news: innovation in online newspapers*. MIT Press. <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/2435.001.0001>
- Boczkowski, P. J. (2015). The material turn in the study of journalism: Some hopeful and cautionary remarks from an early explorer. *Journalism*, 16(1), 65–68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884914545734>

- Bolsover, G., & Howard, P. (2019). Chinese computational propaganda: Automation, algorithms and the manipulation of information about Chinese politics on Twitter and Weibo. *Information, Communication & Society*, 22(14), 2063–2080. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1476576>
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>
- Broussard, M. (2018). *Artificial unintelligence: How computers misunderstand the world*. MIT Press. <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/11022.001.0001>
- Broussard, M., Diakopoulos, N., Guzman, A. L., Abebe, R., Dupagne, M., & Chuan, C.-H. (2019). Artificial intelligence and journalism. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 96(3), 673–695. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699019859901>
- Brown, S., Davidovic, J., & Hasan, A. (2021). The algorithm audit: Scoring the algorithms that score us. *Big Data & Society*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951720983865>
- Bucher, T. (2017). The algorithmic imaginary: Exploring the ordinary affects of Facebook algorithms. *Information, Communication &*

*Society*, 20(1), 30–44.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2016.1154086>

Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K.,

Young, S., Bywaters, D., & Walker, K. (2020). Purposive sampling: Complex or simple? Research case examples.

*Journal of Research in Nursing*, 25(8), 652–661.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987120927206>

Caplan, R., & boyd, danah. (2018). Isomorphism through algorithms:

Institutional dependencies in the case of Facebook. *Big Data & Society*, 5(1), 2053951718757253.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951718757253>

Capoccia, G. (2015). Critical junctures and institutional change. In J.

Mahoney & K. Thelen (Eds.), *Advances in comparative-*

*historical analysis* (pp. 147–179). Cambridge University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316273104.007>

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>

Carlson, M. (2018). Automating judgment? Algorithmic judgment,

news knowledge, and journalistic professionalism. *New Media & Society*, 20(5), 1755–1772.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817706684>

- Carlson, M. (2023). Whose site are we on? The emerging politics of digital journalism studies. *Digital Journalism*, 11(4), 691–707.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2023.2182802>
- Carlson, M., & Lewis, S. C. (Eds.). (2015). *Boundaries of journalism: professionalism, practices and participation*. Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315727684>
- Castells, M. (2007). Communication, power and counter-power in the network society. *International Journal of Communication*, 1(1), 29. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/46>
- Chinese State Council. (2017, July 20). New generation artificial intelligence development plan.  
[http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2017-07/20/content\\_5211996.htm](http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2017-07/20/content_5211996.htm)
- Christian, B. (2020). *The alignment problem: machine learning and human values*. W.W. Norton & Company.
- Christin, A. (2020). *Metrics at work: Journalism and the contested meaning of algorithms*. Princeton University Press.
- Chua, S. (2023). Platform configuration and digital materiality: How news publishers innovate their practices amid entanglements with the evolving technological infrastructure of platforms. *Journalism Studies*, 24(15), 1857–1876.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2023.2247494>

- Clemens, E. S., & Lu, W.-Z. (2020). States as institutions. In T. Janoski, C. de Leon, J. Misra, & I. W. Martin (Eds.), *The new handbook of political sociology* (pp. 435–457). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108147828.017>
- Clerwall, C. (2014). Enter the robot journalist: Users' perceptions of automated content. *Journalism Practice*, 8(5), 519–531. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2014.883116>
- Cohen, J. E. (2019). *Between truth and power: The legal constructions of informational capitalism*. Oxford University Press. <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/between-truth-and-power-9780190246693?cc=au&lang=en&>
- Coleman, W. D., & Perl, A. (1999). Internationalized policy environments and policy network analysis. *Political Studies*, 47(4), 691–709. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.00225>
- Cools, H., & Diakopoulos, N. (2024). Uses of generative AI in the newsroom: Mapping journalists' perceptions of perils and possibilities. *Journalism Practice*. Advance online publication. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17512786.2024.2394558>
- Cools, H., Gorp, B. V., & Opgenhaffen, M. (2022). Where exactly between utopia and dystopia? A framing analysis of AI and automation in us newspapers. *Journalism*, 25(1), 3–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849221122647>

- Couldry, N. (2025). *The space of the world: Can human solidarity survive social media and what if it can't?* Polity Press.
- Couldry, N., & Mejias, U. A. (2019). Data colonialism: Rethinking Big Data's relation to the contemporary subject. *Television & New Media*, 20(4), 336–349.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476418796632>
- Couldry, N., & Mejias, U. A. (2021). The decolonial turn in data and technology research: what is at stake and where is it heading? *Information, Communication & Society*, 26(4), 786–802.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2021.1986102>
- Crawford, K. (2021). *Atlas of AI: Power, politics, and the planetary costs of artificial intelligence*. Yale University Press.
- Creemers, R., Papagiannenas, S., & Knight, A. (Eds.). (2024). *The emergence of China's smart state*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. SAGE Publications.
- Curran, J., & Park, M.-J. (2000). *De-westernizing media studies*. Routledge.
- Danzon-Chambaud, S. (2021). A systematic review of automated journalism scholarship: Guidelines and suggestions for future



- research [version 1; peer review: 2 approved]. *Open Research Europe*, 1, 4. <https://doi.org/10.12688/openreseurope.13096.1>
- Davis, M., & Xiao, J. (2021). De-westernizing platform studies: History and logics of Chinese and U.S. Platforms. *International Journal of Communication*, 15, 20. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/13961>
- de la Bellacasa, M. P. (2011). Matters of care in technoscience: Assembling neglected things. *Social Studies of Science*, 41(1), 85–106. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312710380301>
- Deloitte. (2018). 中国人工智能产业白皮书 [White paper on China's AI industry].
- Denzin, N. K. (2009). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315134543>
- Deuze, M. (2009). The media logic of media work. *Journal of Media Sociology*, 1(Nov 1/2), 22–40.
- Diakopoulos, N. (2019). *Automating the news: How algorithms are rewriting the media*. Harvard University Press.
- Diakopoulos, N. (2021). The algorithms beat: Angles and methods for Investigation. In L. Bounegru & J. Gray (Eds.), *The data journalism handbook: Towards a critical data practice* (pp.

219–229). Amsterdam University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048542079-032>

Diakopoulos, N., Cools, H., Li, C., Helberger, N., Kung, E., Rinehart, A., & Gibbs, L. (2024). Generative AI in journalism: The evolution of newswork and ethics in a generative information ecosystem. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.31540.05765>

DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: Collective rationality and institutional isomorphism in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48(2), 147–160. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095101>

Dolata, U. (2009). Technological innovations and sectoral change: Transformative capacity, adaptability, patterns of change: An analytical framework. *Research Policy*, 38(6), 1066–1076. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2009.03.006>

Dörr, K. N. (2016). Mapping the field of algorithmic journalism. *Digital Journalism*, 4(6), 700–722. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2015.1096748>

Dubois, A., & Gadde, L.-E. (2002). Systematic combining: An abductive approach to case research. *Journal of Business Research*, 55(7), 553–560. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0148-2963\(00\)00195-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0148-2963(00)00195-8)

Duez, D., & Bellanova, R. (2012). A different view on the making of European security: the EU passenger name record system as a

socio-technical assemblage. *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 17 (Special Issue), 109–124.

<https://doi.org/10.54648/EERR2012017>

Eide, M., Larsen, L. O., & Sjøvaag, H. (Eds.). (2016). *Journalism re-examined: Digital challenges and professional orientations (lessons from Northern Europe)*. Intellect Books.

<https://www.intellectbooks.com/journalism-re-examined>

Ford, H., & Hutchinson, J. (2019). Newsbots that mediate journalist and audience relationships. *Digital Journalism*, 7(8), 1013–1031. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2019.1626752>

Franceschini, I., & Loubere, N. (2022). *Global China as Method*. Cambridge University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108999472>

Freedman, D. (2010). Media policy silences: The hidden face of communications decision making. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 15(3), 344–361.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161210368292>

Fuchs, C. (2014). Dallas Smythe reloaded: Critical media and communication studies today. In L. McGuigan & V. Manzerolle (Eds.), *The audience commodity in a digital age: Revisiting critical theory of commercial media* (pp. 267–288). Peter Lang.

- Gillespie, T. (2014). The relevance of algorithms. In T. Gillespie, P. J. Boczkowski, & K. A. Foot (Eds.), *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society*. MIT Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/9780262525374.003.0009>
- Gillespie, T. (2016). Algorithm. In B. Peters (Ed.), *Digital Keywords: A Vocabulary of Information Society and Culture* (pp. 18–30). Princeton University Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400880553-004>
- Glasius, M., de Lange, M., Bartman, J., Dalmasso, E., Lv, A., Del Sordi, A., Michaelsen, M., & Ruijgrok, K. (2018). *Research, Ethics and Risk in the Authoritarian Field*. Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-68966-1>
- Grint, K., & Woolgar, S. (1997). *The machine at work: technology, work and organization*. Polity Press.
- Gunkel, D. J. (2020). *An introduction to communication and artificial intelligence*. Polity Press.
- Guzman, A. L., & Lewis, S. C. (2020). Artificial intelligence and communication: A human–machine communication research agenda. *New Media & Society*, 22(1), 70–86.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444819858691>
- Guzman, A. L., & Lewis, S. C. (2024). What generative AI means for the media industries, and why it matters to study the collective

consequences for advertising, journalism, and public relations.

*Emerging Media*, 2(3), 347–355.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/27523543241289239>

Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing media systems: three models of media and politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2011). *Comparing media systems beyond the Western world*. Cambridge University Press.

Hanitzsch, T. (2017). Professional identity and roles of journalists. *Oxford research encyclopedia of communication*. Oxford University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.95>

Hanitzsch, T., Hanusch, F., Mellado, C., Anikina, M., Berganza, R., Cangoz, I., Coman, M., Hamada, B., Elena Hernández, M., Karadjov, C. D., Virginia Moreira, S., Mwesige, P. G., Plaisance, P. L., Reich, Z., Seethaler, J., Skewes, E. A., Vardiansyah Noor, D., & Kee Wang Yuen, E. (2011). Mapping journalism cultures across nations. *Journalism Studies*, 12(3), 273–293.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2010.512502>

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575–599. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066>

Haraway, D. (1991). *Simians, cyborgs, and women: The reinvention of nature*. Routledge.

- Hardy, J. (2014). *Critical political economy of the media: An Introduction*. Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203136225>
- Hartley, J. M., Petre, C., Bengtsson, M., & Kammer, A. (2023). Autonomies and dependencies: Shifting configurations of power in the platformization of news. *Digital Journalism*, *11*(8), 1375–1390.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2023.2257759>
- Hecht, G. (2012). *Being nuclear: Africans and the global uranium trade*. MIT Press.
- Hecht, G., & Allen, M. T. (2001). Authority, political machines, and technology's history'. In *Technologies of Power: Essays in Honor of Thomas Parke Hughes and Agatha Chipley Hughes* (pp. 1–24). MIT Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/6679.003.0003>
- Hecht, G., & Allen, M. T. (2001). Introduction: Authority, political machines, and technology's history. In M. T. Allen & G. Hecht (Eds.), *Technologies of power: Essays in honor of Thomas Parke Hughes and Agatha Chipley Hughes*. MIT Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/6679.003.0003>
- Heimer, M., & Thøgersen, S. (Eds.). (2011). *Doing fieldwork in China*. NIAS Press.

- Helberger, N. (2019). On the democratic role of news recommenders. *Digital Journalism*, 7(8), 993–1012.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2019.1623700>
- Helberger, N., & Diakopoulos, N. (2022). The European AI Act and how it matters for research into AI in media and journalism. *Digital Journalism*, 11(9), 1751–1760.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2082505>
- Helberger, N., van Drunen, M., Moeller, J., Vrijenhoek, S., & Eskens, S. (2022). Towards a normative perspective on journalistic AI: Embracing the messy reality of normative ideals. *Digital Journalism*, 10(10), 1605–1626.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2152195>
- Hinings, B., Gegenhuber, T., & Greenwood, R. (2018). Digital innovation and transformation: An institutional perspective. *Information and Organization*, 28(1), 52–61.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.infoandorg.2018.02.004>
- Hughes, T. P. (1987). The evolution of large technological systems. In W. E. Bijker, T. P. Hughes, & T. Pinch (Eds.), *The social construction of technological systems*. (pp. 51–82). MIT Press.  
<https://bibliothek.wzb.eu/pdf/1986/p86-9.pdf>
- Jäger, J. (2022). Fighting the beast of the apocalypse: Three fundamental reasons for a critical political economy approach

- to global political economy. *Global Political Economy*, 1(1), 51–58. <https://doi.org/10.1332/JZOZ1019>
- Jamil, S. (2020). Artificial intelligence and journalistic practice: The crossroads of obstacles and opportunities for the Pakistani journalists. *Journalism Practice*, 15(10), 1400–1422. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2020.1788412>
- Jasanoff, S. (Ed.). (2004). *States of knowledge: The co-production of science and social order*. Routledge.
- Jasanoff, S. (2015). One. future imperfect: Science, technology, and the imaginations of modernity. In S. Jasanoff & S. Kim (Eds.), *Dreamscapes of modernity: Sociotechnical imaginaries and the fabrication of power* (pp. 1–33). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Jasanoff, S., & Kim, S.-H. (2009). Containing the atom: Sociotechnical imaginaries and nuclear power in the United States and South Korea. *Minerva*, 47(2), 119–146. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11024-009-9124-4>
- Ji, X., Kuai, J., & Zamith, R. (2024). Scrutinizing algorithms: Assessing journalistic role performance in Chinese news media’s coverage of artificial intelligence. *Journalism Practice*, 18(9), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2024.2336136>
- Jia, C. (2020). Chinese automated journalism: A comparison between expectations and perceived quality. *International Journal of*



*Communication*, 14, 22.

<https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/13334>

Just, N., & Latzer, M. (2017). Governance by algorithms: Reality construction by algorithmic selection on the Internet. *Media, Culture & Society*, 39(2), 238–258.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443716643157>

Just, N., & Latzer, M. (2022). Institutional theoretical approaches for media economics. In J. Krone & T. Pellegrini (Eds.), *Handbook of media and communication economics* (pp. 1–18). Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-34048-3\\_4-2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-34048-3_4-2)

Karlsson, M., Ferrer Conill, R., & Örnebring, H. (2023). Recoding journalism: Establishing normative dimensions for a twenty-first century news media. *Journalism Studies*, 24(5), 553–572.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2022.2161929>

Karp, A. C. (2023, July 25). Opinion | Our Oppenheimer moment: The creation of A.I. weapons. *The New York Times*.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/25/opinion/karp-palantir-artificial-intelligence.html>

Katzenbach, C. (2012). Technologies as institutions: Rethinking the role of technology in media governance constellations. In M. Puppis & N. Just (Eds.), *Trends in communication policy research: New theories, methods and subjects*, Intellect.

- Katzenbach, C. (2018). There is always more than law! From low IP regimes to a governance perspective in copyright research. *Journal of Technology Law and Policy*, 22(2).  
<https://scholarship.law.ufl.edu/jtlp/vol22/iss2/2/>
- Klein, B., Moss, G., & Edwards, L. (2015). *Understanding copyright: Intellectual property in the digital age*. SAGE Publications.
- Koehler, K. (2022). Managing uncertainty: How risk assessment can empower field research. *Qualitative & Multi-Method Research*, 20(2), 29–33. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7140157>
- Kokas, A. (2023). *Trafficking data: How China is winning the battle for digital sovereignty*. Oxford University Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197620502.001.0001>
- Kovács, G., & Spens, K. M. (2005). Abductive reasoning in logistics research. *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management*, 35(2), 132–144.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/09600030510590318>
- Kuai, J. (2024). Unravelling copyright dilemma of AI-generated news and its implications for the institution of journalism: the cases of US, EU, and China. *New Media & Society*, 26(9), 5150–5168.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448241251798>
- Kuai, J. (2025). Navigating the AI hype: Chinese journalists' algorithmic imaginaries and role perception in reporting

- emerging technologies. *Digital Journalism*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2025.2502851>
- Kuai, J., Ferrer-Conill, R., & Karlsson, M. (2022). AI ≥ journalism: How the Chinese copyright law protects tech giants' AI innovations and disrupts the journalistic institution. *Digital Journalism*, *10*(10), 1893–1912. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2120032>
- Kuai, J., Lin, B., Karlsson, M., & Lewis, S. C. (2023). From Wild East to Forbidden City: Mapping algorithmic news distribution in China through a case study of Jinri Toutiao. *Digital Journalism*, *11*(8), 1521–1541. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2121932>
- La Torre, M., & La Torre, M. (2010). *Law as institution*. Springer.
- Latzer, M., & Just, N. (2020). Governance by and of algorithms on the internet: Impact and consequences. In M. Latzer & N. Just, Oxford research encyclopedia of communication. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.904>
- Law, J. (2004). *After method: Mess in social science research (digital print)*. Routledge.
- Law, J., & Ruppert, E. (2013). The social life of methods: Devices. *Journal of Cultural Economy*, *6*(3), 229–240. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17530350.2013.812042>

- Lee, C.-C. (2024). *Crisscrossing communication research: Historical context and global perspective*. Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003533979>
- Lei, Y.-W. (2023). *The gilded cage: Technology, development, and state capitalism in China*. Princeton University Press.
- Lewis, S. C., Guzman, A. L., & Schmidt, T. R. (2019). Automation, journalism, and human–machine communication: Rethinking roles and relationships of humans and machines in news. *Digital Journalism*, 7(4), 409–427.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2019.1577147>
- Lewis, S. C., Sanders, A. K., & Carmody, C. (2019). Libel by algorithm? Automated journalism and the threat of legal liability. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 96(1), 60–81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699018755983>
- Lewis, S. C., & Westlund, O. (2015). Actors, actants, audiences, and activities in cross-media news work: A matrix and a research agenda. *Digital Journalism*, 3(1), 19–37.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2014.927986>
- Liang, F., Chen, Y., & Zhao, F. (2021). The platformization of propaganda: How Xuexi Qiangguo expands persuasion and assesses citizens in China. *International Journal of Communication*, 15, 20.  
<https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/16484>

- Lin, B., & Lewis, S. C. (2022). The one thing journalistic AI just might do for democracy. *Digital Journalism*, 10(10), 1627–1649.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2084131>
- Linden, C.-G. (2017). Decades of automation in the newsroom: Why are there still so many jobs in journalism? *Digital Journalism*, 5(2), 123–140.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2016.1160791>
- Lindén, C-G., Tuulonen, H., Bäck, A., Diakopoulos, N., Granroth-Wilding, M., Haapanen, L., Leppänen, L., Melin, M., Moring, T., Munezero, M., Sirén-Heikel, S., Södergård, C., Toivonen, H. (2019). News Automation: The rewards, risks and realities of ‘machine journalism’. WAN-IFRA Report.
- Liu, J. (2022). Social data governance: Towards a definition and model. *Big Data & Society*, 9(2), 20539517221111352.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/20539517221111352>
- Liu, J., & Su, C. C. (2021). Comparative communication studies within and beyond great China. *International Communication Gazette*, 83(5), 393–403.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/17480485211029018>
- Long, Q., & Shao, L. (2021). Beyond propaganda: The changing journalistic practices of China’s party press in the digital era. *Journalism Practice*, 17(4), 799–813.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.1949628>

- Lowrey, W. (2018). Journalism as institution. In T. P. Vos (Ed.), *Journalism* (pp. 125–148). Walter de Gruyter Inc.
- Lynch, M. (2013). Ontography: Investigating the production of things, deflating ontology. *Social Studies of Science*, 43(3), 444–462.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312713475925>
- MacCormick, N. (2007). *Institutions of Law: An Essay in Legal Theory*. Oxford University Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198267911.001.0001>
- Mager, A., & Katzenbach, C. (2021). Future imaginaries in the making and governing of digital technology: Multiple, contested, commodified. *New Media & Society*, 23(2), 223–236.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820929321>
- Mahoney, J. (2000). Path dependence in historical sociology. *Theory and Society*, 29(4), 507–548.  
<https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1007113830879>
- Marconi, F. (2020). *Newsmakers: Artificial intelligence and the future of journalism*. Columbia University Press.
- Marres, N. (2007). The issues deserve more credit: Pragmatist contributions to the study of public involvement in controversy. *Social Studies of Science*, 37(5), 759–780.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312706077367>
- Marres, N., & Gerlitz, C. (2016). Interface methods: Renegotiating relations between digital social research, STS and sociology.

*The Sociological Review*, 64(1), 21–46.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.12314>

Marsh, D., & Smith, M. (2000). Understanding Policy Networks: Towards a dialectical approach. *Political Studies*, 48(1), 4–21.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.00247>

Martin, A., Myers, N., & Viseu, A. (2015). The politics of care in technoscience. *Social Studies of Science*, 45(5), 625–641.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/43829049>

McGuigan, L. (2019). Automating the audience commodity: The unacknowledged ancestry of programmatic advertising. *New Media & Society*, 21(11–12), 2366–2385.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444819846449>

Meese, J., & Bannerman, S. (Eds.). (2022). The algorithmic distribution of news: Policy responses. Springer International Publishing.

Mehos, D. C., & Moon, S. M. (2011). The uses of portability: Circulating experts in the technopolitics of Cold War and decolonization. In G. Hecht (Ed.), *Entangled geographies: Empire and technopolitics in the global Cold War* (pp. 42–74). MIT Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/9780262515788.003.0003>

Mellado, C. (2015). Professional roles in news content: Six dimensions of journalistic role performance. *Journalism*

*Studies*, 16(4), 596–614.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2014.922276>

Mellado, C. (Ed.). (2021). *Beyond journalistic norms: Role performance and news in comparative perspective*. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

Mellado, C., Hellmueller, L., Márquez-Ramírez, M., Humanes, M. L., Sparks, C., Stepinska, A., Pasti, S., Schielicke, A.-M., Tandoc, E., & Wang, H. (2017). The hybridization of journalistic cultures: A comparative study of journalistic role performance. *Journal of Communication*, 67(6), 944–967.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12339>

Meng, B. (2018). *The politics of Chinese media: Consensus and contestation*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Meng, J., & Zhang, S. I. (2022). Digital journalism in China: Media convergence, the ‘Central Kitchen’ and the platformization of news. In A. Allan (Ed), *The Routledge companion to news and journalism* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003174790-15>

Min, S. J., & Fink, K. (2021). Keeping up with the technologies: Distressed journalistic labor in the pursuit of “shiny” technologies. *Journalism Studies*, 22(14), 1987–2004.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2021.1979425>



- Mol, A. (1999). Ontological politics. A word and some questions. *The Sociological Review*, 47(1\_suppl), 74–89.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.1999.tb03483.x>
- Montal, T., & Reich, Z. (2017). I, robot. You, journalist. Who is the author? Authorship, bylines and full disclosure in automated journalism. *Digital Journalism*, 5(7), 829–849.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2016.1209083>
- Monzer, C., Moeller, J., Helberger, N., & Eskens, S. (2020). User perspectives on the news personalisation process: Agency, trust and utility as building blocks. *Digital Journalism*, 8(9), 1142–1162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2020.1773291>
- Morgan, H. (2022). Conducting a qualitative document analysis. *The Qualitative Report*, 27(1), 64–77.  
<https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5044>
- Mosco, V. (2009). *The political economy of communication* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Munoriyarwa, A., Chiumbu, S., & Motsathebe, G. (2021). Artificial intelligence practices in everyday news production: The case of South Africa’s mainstream newsrooms. *Journalism Practice*, 17(7), 1374–1392.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.1984976>

- Murdock, G., & Golding, P. (1973). For a political economy of mass communications. *Socialist Register*, 10, 205–234.  
<https://socialistregister.com/index.php/srv/article/view/5355>
- Nanni, R. (2022). Digital sovereignty and internet standards: Normative implications of public-private relations among Chinese stakeholders in the Internet Engineering Task Force. *Information, Communication & Society*, 25(16), 2342–2362.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2022.2129270>
- Napoli, P. M. (2014). Automated media: An institutional theory perspective on algorithmic media production and consumption. *Communication Theory*, 24(3), 340–360.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12039>
- Napoli, P. M. (2021). The platform beat: Algorithmic watchdogs in the disinformation age. *European Journal of Communication*, 36(4), 376–390. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026732312111028359>
- Napoli, P. M. (2023). What is media policy? The annals of the American academy of political and social science, 707(1), 29–45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00027162231211387>
- Natale, S. (2021). *Deceitful media: Artificial intelligence and social life after the Turing test*. Oxford University Press.
- Nechushtai, E. (2018). Could digital platforms capture the media through infrastructure? *Journalism*, 19(8), 1043–1058.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884917725163>

- Nielsen, R. K., & Ganter, S. A. (2022). *The power of platforms: Shaping media and society*. Oxford University Press.
- Norbäck, M. (2021). Back to the future of journalist work? Entrepreneurial subjectivity and freelance journalism in Sweden. *Journalism*, 24(4), 785–802.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849211033131>
- Örnebring, H. (2010). Technology and journalism-as-labour: Historical perspectives. *Journalism*, 11(1), 57–74.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884909350644>
- Örnebring, H., & Karlsson, M. (2022). *Journalistic autonomy: The genealogy of a concept*. University of Missouri Press.
- Oudshoorn, N., & Pinch, T. (2003). Introduction: How users and non-users matter. In N. Oudshoorn & T. Pinch (Eds.), *How users matter* (pp. 1–26). MIT Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/3592.003.0002>
- Papaevangelou, C. (2023). Funding intermediaries: Google and Facebook’s strategy to capture journalism. *Digital Journalism*, 12(2), 234–255.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2155206>
- Pasquale, F. (2015). *The black box society*. Harvard University Press.
- Piasecki, S., Morosoli, S., Helberger, N., & Naudts, L. (2024). AI-generated journalism: Do the transparency provisions in the AI

- Act give news readers what they hope for? *Internet Policy Review*, 13(4). <https://doi.org/10.14763/2024.4.1810>
- Picard, R. G. (2014). Twilight or new dawn of journalism? *Journalism Studies*, 15(5), 500–510.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2014.895530>
- Picard, R. G. (2015). Protecting news today. In R. R. John & J. Silberstein-Loeb (Eds.), *Making news: The political economy of journalism in Britain and America from the Glorious Revolution to the Internet* (pp. 223–237). Oxford University Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199676187.003.0009>
- Pickard, V. (2020). Restructuring democratic infrastructures: A policy approach to the journalism crisis. *Digital Journalism*, 8(6), 704–719. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2020.1733433>
- Pierson, P. (2004). *Politics in time: History, institutions, and social analysis*. Princeton University Press.
- Pinch, T. J., & Bijker, W. E. (1984). The social construction of facts and artefacts: or how the sociology of science and the sociology of technology might benefit each other. *Social Studies of Science*, 14(3), 399–441.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/030631284014003004>
- Poell, T., Nieborg, D. B., & Duffy, B. E. (2022). Spaces of negotiation: Analyzing platform power in the news industry. *Digital*

*Journalism*, 11(8), 1391–1409.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2103011>

Porlezza, C., & Schapals, A. K. (2024). AI ethics in journalism (studies): An evolving field between research and practice. *Emerging Media*, 2(3), 356–370.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/27523543241288818>

Quintais, J. P. (2019). The new copyright in the Digital Single Market Directive: A critical look. *European Intellectual Property Review*, 42(1), 28–41. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3424770>

Reese, S. D. (2022). The institution of journalism: Conceptualizing the press in a hybrid media system. *Digital Journalism*, 10(2), 253–266. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2021.1977669>

Reese, S. D. (2021). *The crisis of the institutional press*. Polity Press.

Reese, S. D., Chen, W., & Pan, Z. (2023). Revisiting networked China: Challenges for the study of digital media and civic engagement. *Information, Communication & Society*, 26(2), 239–252.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2022.2161831>

Reitz, J. C. (1998). How to do comparative law. *The American Journal of Comparative Law*, 46(4), 617–636.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/840981>

Ren, C., & Dan, V. (2022). Frames and journalistic roles in Chinese reporting on HIV: Insights from a content analysis and interviews focused on verbal and visual modalities\*.

*Journalism Studies*, 23(11), 1327–1349.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2022.2084145>

Repnikova, M. (2017). *Media politics in China: Improvising power under authoritarianism*. Cambridge University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108164474>

Rhodes, R. A. W. (2007). Understanding governance: Ten years on.

*Organization Studies*, 28(8), 1243–1264.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840607076586>

Rhodes, R. A. W., & Marsh, D. (1992). New directions in the study of policy networks. *European Journal of Political Research*, 21(1–2), 181–205. [https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.1992.tb00294.x)

[6765.1992.tb00294.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.1992.tb00294.x)

Roberts, H., Cows, J., Morley, J., Taddeo, M., Wang, V., & Floridi, L.

(2021). The Chinese approach to artificial intelligence: An analysis of policy, ethics, and regulation. *AI & SOCIETY*, 36(1),

59–77. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-020-00992-2>

Rodgers, S. (2015). Foreign objects? Web content management

systems, journalistic cultures and the ontology of software.

*Journalism*, 16(1), 10–26.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884914545729>

Rolandsson, T., Widholm, A., & Rahm-Skågeby, J. (2022). Managing

public service: The harmonization of datafication and

managerialism in the development of a news-sorting algorithm.

*Digital Journalism*, 10(10), 1691–1709.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2119151>

Russell, S. J. (2019). *Human compatible: artificial intelligence and the problem of control*. Viking.

Russell, S. J., & Norvig, P. (2003). *Artificial intelligence: A modern approach* (2nd ed.). Prentice Hall/Pearson Education.

Ryfe, D. (2019). Institutional theory and journalism. In T. P. Vos, F. Hanusch, D. Dimitrakopoulou, M. Geertsema-Sligh, & A. Sehl (Eds.), *The international encyclopedia of journalism studies* (pp. 1–5). Wiley.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118841570.iejs0037>

Sahay, S., & Robey, D. (1996). Organizational context, social interpretation, and the implementation and consequences of geographic information systems. *Accounting, Management and Information Technologies*, 6(4), 255–282.

[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0959-8022\(96\)90016-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0959-8022(96)90016-8)

Savage, M. (2013). The ‘social life of methods’: A critical introduction. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 30(4), 3–21.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276413486160>

Schaetz, N., & Schjøtt, A. (2025). AI hype and its function: an ethnographic study of the local news AI initiative of the Associated Press. *Digital Journalism*, 1–18. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2024.2443163>

- Schapals, A. K., & Porlezza, C. (2020). Assistance or resistance? Evaluating the intersection of automated journalism and journalistic role conceptions. *Media and Communication*, 8(3), 16–26. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v8i3.3054>
- Scharpf, F. W. (2018). *Games real actors play: Actor-centered institutionalism in policy research*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Schudson, M. (2011). *The sociology of news*. W.W. Norton.
- Seale, C. (Ed.). (2018). *Researching society and culture* (4th edition). SAGE Publications.
- Seipp, T., Fathaigh, R. Ó., & van Drunen, M. (2023). Defining the ‘media’ in Europe: pitfalls of the proposed European Media Freedom Act. *Journal of Media Law*, 15(1), 39–51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17577632.2023.2240998>
- Shoemaker, P. J., & Reese, S. D. (2014). *Mediating the message in the 21st century: a media sociology perspective* (3rd ed.). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
- Shoemaker, P., Tankard, J., & Lasorsa, D. (2004). *How to build social science theories*. SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412990110>
- Simon, F. M. (2022). Uneasy bedfellows: AI in the news, platform companies and the issue of journalistic autonomy. *Digital*



*Journalism*, 10(10), 1832–1854.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2063150>

Simon, F. M. (2023). Escape me if you can: How AI reshapes news organisations' dependency on platform companies. *Digital Journalism*, 12(2), 149–170.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2023.2287464>

Sismondo, S. (2010). *An introduction to Science and Technology Studies* (vol. 1). Wiley-Blackwell.

Sjøvaag, H. (2024). The business of news in the AI economy. *AI Magazine*, 45(2), 246–255. <https://doi.org/10.1002/aaai.12172>

Smets, A., Hendrickx, J., & Ballon, P. (2022). We're in this together: A multi-stakeholder approach for news recommenders. *Digital Journalism*, 10(10), 1813–1831.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2021.2024079>

Smythe, D. W. (1977). Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism. *Canadian Journal of Political and Society Theory*, 1(3), 1–28.

<https://journals.uvic.ca/index.php/ctheory/article/download/13715/4463>

Smythe, D. W. (1981). *Dependency road: Communications, capitalism, consciousness, and Canada*. Ablex Publishing Corporation.

- Smythe, D. W. (1994). After bicycles? What? In T. Guback (Ed.), *Counterclockwise: Perspectives on communication* (pp. 230–244). Westview Press.
- Sovacool, B. K., Lovell, K., & Ting, M. B. (2018). Reconfiguration, contestation, and decline: Conceptualising mature large technical systems. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 43(6), 1066–1097. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0162243918768074>
- Steensen, S. (2011). Online journalism and the promises of new technology: A critical review and look ahead. *Journalism Studies*, 12(3), 311–327.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2010.501151>
- Steensen, S., & Ahva, L. (2015). Theories of journalism in a digital age: An exploration and introduction. *Digital Journalism*, 3(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2014.927984>
- Steensen, S., Grøndahl Larsen, A. M., Hågvar, Y. B., & Fonn, B. K. (2019). What does digital journalism studies look like? *Digital Journalism*, 7(3), 320–342.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2019.1581071>
- Stenbom, A., Wiggberg, Mattias, & Norlund, T. (2023). Exploring communicative AI: Reflections from a Swedish newsroom. *Digital Journalism*, 11(9), 1622–1640.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2021.2007781>

- Stockmann, D. (2013). *Media commercialization and authoritarian rule in China*. Cambridge University Press.
- Stockmann, D. (2023). Tech companies and the public interest: The role of the state in governing social media platforms. *Information, Communication & Society*, 26(1), 1–15.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2022.2032796>
- Suchman, L. (2023). The uncontroversial ‘thingness’ of AI. *Big Data & Society*, 10(2), 20539517231206794.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/20539517231206794>
- Sun, M., Hu, W., & Wu, Y. (2024). Public perceptions and attitudes towards the application of artificial intelligence in journalism: from a China-based survey. *Journalism Practice*, 18(3), 548–570. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2022.2055621>
- Svensson, M. (2006). Ethical dilemmas: Balancing distance with involvement. In M. Heimer & S. Thøgersen (Eds.), *Doing fieldwork in China* (pp. 262–280).
- Svensson, M. (2017a). The networked China researcher. *Asiascape: Digital Asia*, 4(1–2), 76–102.  
<https://doi.org/10.1163/22142312-12340069>
- Svensson, M. (2017b). The rise and fall of investigative journalism in China: Digital opportunities and political challenges. *Media, Culture & Society*, 39(3), 440–445.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443717690820>

- Tegmark, M. (2017). *Life 3.0: Being human in the age of artificial intelligence*. Allen Lane.
- Tharoor, I. (2023, July 26). Analysis | The world reckons with a new ‘Oppenheimer moment.’ Washington Post.  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/07/26/oppenheimer-nolan-ai-artificial-intelligence/>
- Thompson, J. B. (1995). *The media and modernity: A social theory of the media*. Stanford University Press.
- Tiller, E. H., & Cross, F. B. (2006). What is legal doctrine?  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.730284>
- Tong, J. (2019). The taming of critical journalism in China: A combination of political, economic and technological forces. *Journalism Studies*, 20(1), 79–96.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2017.1375386>
- Trapova, A., & Mezei, P. (2022). Robojournalism: A copyright study on the use of artificial intelligence in the European news industry. *GRUR International*, 71(7), 589–602.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/grurint/ikac038>
- Tworek, H. J. S. (2015). Protecting news before the internet. In R. R. John & J. Silberstein-Loeb (Eds.), *Making news: The political economy of journalism in Britain and America from the Glorious Revolution to the Internet* (pp. 196–222). Oxford

University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199676187.003.0008>

Van Dalen, A. (2012). The algorithms behind the headlines.

*Journalism Practice*, 6(5–6), 648–658.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2012.667268>

van der Vlist, F., Helmond, A., & Ferrari, F. (2024). Big AI: Cloud infrastructure dependence and the industrialisation of artificial intelligence. *Big Data & Society*, 11(1).

<https://doi.org/10.1177/20539517241232630>

Van Dijck, J., Poell, T., & De Waal, M. (2018). *The platform society: Public values in a connective world*. Oxford University Press.

Vaughan, D. (1992). Theory elaboration: The heuristics of case analysis. In C. C. Ragin & H. S. Becker (Eds.), *What is a case? Exploring the foundations of social inquiry* (pp. 173–202). Cambridge University Press.

Veale, M., Matus, K., & Gorwa, R. (2023). AI and Global Governance: Modalities, Rationales, Tensions. *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, 19(Volume 19, 2023), 255–275.

<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-lawsocsci-020223-040749>

Verdegem, P. (2021). *AI for everyone? Critical perspectives*.

University of Westminster Press.

Verdegem, P. (2024). Dismantling AI capitalism: The commons as an alternative to the power concentration of Big Tech. *AI &*

*SOCIETY*, 39(2), 727–737. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-022-01437-8>

- Vos, T. P. (2019). Journalism as institution. *Oxford research encyclopedia of communication*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.825>
- Waddell, T. F. (2018). A robot wrote this? How perceived machine authorship affects news credibility. *Digital Journalism*, 6(2), 236–255. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2017.1384319>
- Wang, G., & Huang, Y.-H. C. (2016). Contextuality, commensurability, and comparability in comparative research: Learning from Chinese relationship research. *Cross-Cultural Research*, 50(2), 154–177. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1069397116630241>
- Wang, H. (2021). Transformation or continuation? Comparing journalism in digital and legacy media in China. *Journalism Practice*, 16(7), 1431–1448. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2020.1870528>
- Wang, H. (2023). *Disrupting Chinese journalism: Changing politics, economics and journalistic practices of the legacy newspaper press*. Routledge.
- Wang, H., & Lee, F. L. (2014). Research on Chinese investigative journalism, 1978–2013: A critical review. *The China Review*, 14(2), 215–251. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23928511>

- Wang, H., & Li, A. (2024). A watchdog that no longer barks: Role performance of investigative journalism in China in the digital age. *Journalism Practice*, 18(9), 2240–2257.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2024.2308530>
- Wang, H., & Sparks, C. (2019). Chinese newspaper groups in the digital era: The resurgence of the party press. *Journal of Communication*, 69(1), 94–119.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqy061>
- Wasko, J. (2014). The study of the political economy of the media in the twenty-first century. *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics*, 10(3), 259–271.  
[https://doi.org/10.1386/macp.10.3.259\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/macp.10.3.259_1)
- Webb, A. (2019). *The big nine: How the tech titans and their thinking machines could warp humanity*. PublicAffairs.
- Weick, K. E. (1979). *The social psychology of organizing* (2nd ed.). Addison-Wesley.
- Wigger, A. (2022). Continuing to fight the beast of the apocalypse: Final reasons for a critical political economy approach to global political economy. *Global Political Economy*, 1(1), 188–196.  
<https://doi.org/10.1332/AMGM8614>
- Wilczek, B., Haim, M., & Thurman, N. (2024). Transforming the value chain of local journalism with artificial intelligence. *AI Magazine*, 45(2), 200–211. <https://doi.org/10.1002/aaai.12174>

- Woolgar, S. (1990). Configuring the user: The case of usability trials. *The Sociological Review*, 38(1\_suppl), 58–99.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.1990.tb03349.x>
- Woolgar, S., & Lezaun, J. (2013). The wrong bin bag: A turn to ontology in Science and Technology Studies? *Social Studies of Science*, 43(3), 321–340.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312713488820>
- Wu, S. (2024). Why context matters in code studies: Exploring ways to globalize/ diversify understandings of algorithmic and AI use in journalism. *Digital Journalism*, 12(7), 1052–1058.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2024.2395477>
- Wyatt, S. (2008). Technological determinism is dead; Long live technological determinism. In E. Hackett, O. Amsterdamska, M. Lynch, & J. Wajcman (Eds.), *Handbook of Science and Technology Studies* (pp. 165–180). MIT Press.
- Xi, J. (2019, March 15). Xi Jinping: Jiakuai tuidong meiti ronghe fazhan goujian quanmeiti chuanbo geju [Xi Jinping: Accelerate the development of media convergence, build an omnimedia communication]. [http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2019-03/15/content\\_5374027.htm](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2019-03/15/content_5374027.htm)
- Xin, L. (2023). Sociotechnical imaginaries as an analytical tool for examining digital histories and digital futures. In K. Adi & L. Xin (Eds.), *Digital politics, digital histories, digital futures:*



*New approaches for historicising, politicising and imagining the digital.* Emerald Publishing Limited.

Xinhuaazhiyun. (n.d.). Retrieved April 25, 2025, from

<https://www.xinhuaazhiyun.com/>

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Yu, X., & Wang, J. (2024). Is journalism just a job? Findings on journalists' career motivation, news efficacy and news avoidance from structural equation modeling in China.

*Journalism*, 25(6), 1422–1442.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849231182530>

Yu, Y., & Huang, K. (2021). Friend or foe? Human journalists' perspectives on artificial intelligence in Chinese media outlets.

*Chinese Journal of Communication*, 14(4), 409–429.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/17544750.2021.1915832>

Zamith, R. (2019). Algorithms and journalism. *Oxford research encyclopedia of communication*. Oxford University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.779>

Zelizer, B. (2019). Why journalism is about more than digital technology. *Digital Journalism*, 7(3), 343–350.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2019.1571932>

Zeng, J. (2020). *Slogan politics: Understanding Chinese foreign policy concepts*. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Zeng, J. (2022). *Artificial intelligence with Chinese characteristics: National strategy, security and authoritarian governance*. Palgrave Macmillan Singapore. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-0722-7>
- Zeng, J., & Chan, C. (2023). Envisioning a more inclusive future for Digital Journalism: A diversity audit of journalism studies (2013–2021). *Digital Journalism*, 11(4), 609–629. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2023.2182803>
- Zhang, T. (2022). Media ethnography in China: Ethics, access and interviews in a non-Western context. *Global Media Journal – German Edition*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.22032/DBT.53028>
- Zhao, Y. (2007). After mobile phones, what? Re-embedding the social in China’s “digital revolution.” *International Journal of Communication*, 1(1), 29. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/5>
- Zhao, Y. (2008). *Communication in China: Political economy, power, and conflict*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Zhao, Y. (2012). Understanding China’s media system in a world historical context. In D. C. Hallin & P. Mancini (Eds.), *Comparing media systems beyond the Western world* (pp. 143–174). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139005098.009>

- Zheng, H., De Jong, M., & Koppenjan, J. (2010). Applying policy network theory to policy-making in China: The case of urban health insurance reform. *Public Administration*, 88(2), 398–417. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9299.2010.01822.x>
- Zuboff, S. (2019). *The age of surveillance capitalism: The fight for a human future at the new frontier of power*. PublicAffairs.

## 7. Appendices

---

### 7.1 Appendix A: List of interviewees

**Table A1**

*List of Interviewees From Various Media Organisations (Appendix A)*

Code	Media organisation	Position
P-01	National News Agency	Manager
P-02	National New Media	Journalist
P-03	National TV New Media	Journalist
P-04	National News Agency Local Branch	Journalist, Manager
P-05	National TV in English	Journalist
P-06	National TV in English	Editor
P-07	National TV Legal Channel	Journalist
P-08	National TV Financial Channel	Journalist, Manager
P-09	Provincial Newspaper	Journalist
P-10	Provincial Newspaper	Journalist
P-11	Provincial New Media	Editor
P-12	Provincial TV	Producer
P-13	Provincial TV	Manager
P-14	Provincial Radio	Journalist
P-15	Municipal Newspaper	Journalist, Manager
P-16	Municipal Newspaper	Journalist
P-17	Private Technology New Media	Journalist
P-18	Private Financial Magazine	Journalist
P-19	Freelance	Journalist
P-20	Journalism Innovation Tech Firm	Manager

---

## 7.2 Appendix B: List of empirical material examined for Article III

### Interview videos:

1. Diyi Caijing. August 1, 2014. “20140801 《中国经营者》：张一鸣 80 后的 互联网财富神话。” [20140801, ‘Managing China,’ Zhang Yiming: The Internet wealth myth of the post-80s.] Length: 23 minutes 52 seconds. URL: <http://www.le.com/ptv/vplay/20416798.html>
2. Tech Ifeng. August 2014. “《创业记》第 6 期 张一鸣：版权风波的意外收获。” [‘Entrepreneurship,’ Episode 6, Zhang Yiming: The windfall profits of the copyright storm.] Length: 43 minutes 36 seconds. URL: <https://v.qq.com/x/page/d01345ptujy.html>
3. Xigua Video. June 2015. “张泉灵对话张一鸣：今日头条能多了解我？” [Zhang Quanling dialogues with Zhang Yiming: How much can Toutiao know about me?] Length: 10 minutes 24 seconds. URL: <https://www.ixigua.com/6801108267469636100?logTag=4a888208b9dfe60a49fc>
4. Tencent Tech. February 2016. “《创业中国》第三期：中型互联网公司的突围。” [‘Innovation of China,’ Episode 3, Breakthrough of medium-sized internet companies.] Length: 31 minutes 38 seconds. URL: <https://v.qq.com/x/cover/lm092r8lqh4k4va/n0019rr0964.html>
5. Jinri Toutiao. April 12, 2016. “王石对话张一鸣：创业不能只考虑 6 个月融到资。” [Wang Shi dialogues with Zhang Yiming: Entrepreneurship isn’t just considering financing in 6 months.] Length: 18 minutes 45 seconds. URL: <https://www.ixigua.com/6273770356855538178?logTag=12cc0c8ef32a5f97b9b1>
6. New Economy 100 People. August 2016. “张一鸣：不惧巨头拼命奔跑，四年做成百亿美元的今日头条。” [Zhang Yiming: Don't be afraid of giants and run desperately, making Toutiao worth tens of billions of dollars in four years.] Length: 10 minutes 20 seconds. URL: <https://www.ixigua.com/6457400222371807757?logTag=d7d4f8471ec081cfd524>
7. CCTV 2 Caijing. November 27, 2016. “《对话》 20161127 头条背后的男人。” [‘Dialogue,’ 20161127, The man behind Toutiao.] Length: 51 minutes 10 seconds. URL: <http://tv.cctv.com/2016/11/27/VIDE818uFG771bZmQkeUGqNv161127.shtml>
8. Huaxing Capital. April 25, 2017. “华兴资本包凡对话王兴，张一鸣。” [Huaxing Capital Baofan dialogue with Wang Xing and Zhang Yiming.] Date: Length: 15 minutes 34 seconds. URL: <https://v.qq.com/x/cover/27zn6qxnfgbftki/g0397iajus4.html>

9. New Economy 100 People. October 25, 2017. “《刚正面》第 1 集：张一鸣的信息基因。” [‘Just Front,’ Episode 1: Zhang Yiming’s information gene.] Length: 16 minutes 04 seconds. URL: <https://v.qq.com/x/cover/q5oxvd41s6a3qjo/j0565wnz9wq.html>
10. Jinri Toutiao. March 20, 2018. “张一鸣钱颖一对话精华：创业者最需要耐心，做产品最需要同理心。” [The selections of the dialogue between Zhang Yiming and Qian Yingyi: Entrepreneurs need patience the most, and product-makers need empathy the most.] Length: 17 minutes 53 seconds. URL: <https://www.ixigua.com/6537609226582229511?logTag=e4987a1bcd3601239f34>

### Documentary:

11. Jinri Toutiao. March 2019. “张一鸣回忆创业初期：欠电费、5 平米会议室、员工来了 2 天就走。” [Zhang Yiming recalled the early days of entrepreneurship: arrears of electricity bills, a 5-square-meter meeting room, and the staff left within 2 days after they came.] Length: 4 minutes 23 seconds. URL: <https://www.ixigua.com/6899739763868172814?logTag=f1218f3df51cf0d4b1e0>

### Talks (video):

12. Jinri Toutiao. September 8, 2015. “今日头条 CEO 张一鸣头条号创作者大会演讲《机器之心》。” [Toutiao CEO Zhang Yiming’s Toutiao creators conference speech ‘The Heart of the Machine.’] Length: 29 minutes 38 seconds. URL: [https://www.iqiyi.com/w\\_19rtlsn6ah.html](https://www.iqiyi.com/w_19rtlsn6ah.html)

### Media coverage and interviews (text):

13. Wang, Zaixing, and Xiwen Chen. July 19, 2014. “张一鸣，他的每一句话都在被挑错。” [Zhang Yiming, every word of his is being found at fault]. 博客天下 [Blog world]. <https://www.tmtpost.com/123328.html>
14. Wang, Xiaoya, and Yiming Zhang. August 27, 2014. “小丫专访张一鸣：我不是‘新闻搬运工’。” [Xiaoya interview with Zhang Yiming: I am not a "news porter."] CCTV. <http://jingji.cntv.cn/2014/08/27/ARTI1409120412396179.shtml>
15. Song, Wei. December 14, 2016. “张一鸣：今日头条不模拟人性，也不引导人性，你们文化人给了我们太多深刻的命题。” [Zhang Yiming: Jinri Toutiao does not imitate or guide humanity. Your culturati have given us too many profound propositions.] *Caijing*. <https://www.huxiu.com/article/174510.html>
16. Yusheng. September 18, 2017. “人民网一评算法推荐：不能让算法决定内容。” [People’s Daily Online comments on the algorithmic

- recommendation I: Don't let the algorithm determine the content.] *People's Daily Online*. <http://opinion.people.com.cn/n1/2017/0918/c1003-29540709.html>
17. Yusheng. September 19, 2017. “人民网二评算法推荐：别被算法困在‘信息茧房’。” [People's Daily Online comments on the algorithmic recommendation II: Don't be trapped in the "information cocoons" by algorithms.] *People's Daily Online*. <http://opinion.people.com.cn/n1/2017/0919/c1003-29544724.html>
  18. Yusheng. September 20, 2017. “人民网三评算法推荐：警惕算法走向创新的反面。” [People's Daily Online comments on the algorithmic recommendation III: Be wary of the negative side of algorithms to innovation.] *People's Daily Online*. <http://opinion.people.com.cn/n1/2017/0920/c1003-29545718.html>
  19. Qian, Yingyi, and Yiming Zhang. March 20, 2018. “张一鸣对话钱颖一：要有耐心持续在一个领域深入才会取得成绩。” [Zhang Yiming dialogues with Qian Yingyi: To make an achievement, you must have patience and continue to deepen in a field.] *Xinhua Net*. [http://www.xinhuanet.com/fortune/2018-03/23/c\\_129836035.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/fortune/2018-03/23/c_129836035.htm)
  20. Qian, Yingyi, and Yiming Zhang. March 20, 2018. “钱颖一对话张一鸣：超越习惯性思维，做别人认为不可行的事，对话实录|（下）。” [Qian Yingyi dialogue with Zhang Yiming: Beyond habitual thinking and do what others think is not feasible | Dialogue Record (Part 2).] *Sohu*. [https://www.sohu.com/a/226504510\\_641792](https://www.sohu.com/a/226504510_641792)
  21. Li, Ping. November 15, 2019. “今日头条七年打造通用信息平台，推出‘创作者收益计划’。” [Toutiao has built a general information platform in seven years and launched the "Creator Income Plan"] *Guangming Online*. [http://www.xinhuanet.com/tech/2019-11/15/c\\_1125237742.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/tech/2019-11/15/c_1125237742.htm)
  22. Chu, Qingzhou, and Jin A. October 13, 2020. “认为张一鸣洞察人心，其实是个很大的误解。” [To think that Zhang Yiming has insight into people's hearts, is a big misunderstanding.] *Cover News*. <https://www.jiemian.com/article/5104164.html>

### **Zhang Yiming's letter to the public or employees and internal or external speeches:**

23. Zhang, Yiming. November 17, 2015. “张一鸣南开时光三件事：耐心知识和伙伴。” [Zhang Yiming's three things in Nankai (University): Patience, knowledge and partners.] URL: <http://tech.sina.com.cn/i/2015-11-17/doc-ixksqiu1659202.shtml>
24. Zhang, Yiming. April 11, 2018. “张一鸣道歉：今日头条要将正确价值观融入技术产品。” [Zhang Yiming apologizes: Jinri Toutiao will integrate correct values into technological products.] URL: <https://www.163.com/tech/article/DF3IToP300097U7R.html>

25. Zhang, Yiming. August 4, 2020. “张一鸣给员工的信：不要在意短期  
损誉，耐心做好正确的事。” [Zhang Yiming’s letter to employees: Don’t  
care about short-term damage to your reputation and do the right  
thing patiently.] URL:  
[https://finance.sina.com.cn/chanjing/gsnews/2020-08-04/doc-  
iivhuipn6795243.shtml](https://finance.sina.com.cn/chanjing/gsnews/2020-08-04/doc-iivhuipn6795243.shtml)
26. Zhang, Yiming. March 30, 2021. “张一鸣最新内部演讲：我只是个平  
常人，平常人也能做非常事。” [Zhang Yiming’s latest internal speech:  
I’m just an ordinary person, and ordinary people can do  
extraordinary things.]. URL:  
<https://www.geekpark.net/news/275954>
27. Zhang, Yiming. May 20, 2021. “张一鸣内部全员信。” [Zhang Yiming’s  
internal letter.] URL: <https://www.36kr.com/p/1232165369369221>

### **Zhang Yiming’s publications and Toutiao’s releases**

28. Zhang, Yiming. 2014. “机器替代编辑?” [Machines replace editors?]  
*传媒评论* [Media Review] 3: 36-40.  
[https://www.cnki.com.cn/Article/CJFDTOTAL-  
SJXW201403013.htm](https://www.cnki.com.cn/Article/CJFDTOTAL-SJXW201403013.htm)
29. Cao, Huanhuan. January 16, 2018. “今日头条算法原理（全文）。”  
[Jinri Toutiao’s algorithm principle (full text).] *Jinri Toutiao*.  
<https://www.toutiao.com/i6511211182064402951>



### 7.3 Appendix C: List of empirical material examined for Article V

**Table C1**

*List of Empirical Material Examined for Article V (Appendix C)*

No.	Region	Category	File Name	Type	Author/Publisher	Issue Date
1	US	Primary	17 U.S.C. § 101 et. seq. COPYRIGHTS	Law	United States Congress	First enacted in 1976, updated till October 2022
2	US	Primary	Compendium of U.S. Copyright Office Practices	Guidelines	US Copyright Office	Updated 2021
3	US	Contextual	The Copyright Act of 1976	Law	United States Congress	1976
4	US	Contextual	The Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998	Law	United States Congress	1998
5	US	Contextual	The Telecommunications Act of 1996	Law	United States Congress	
6	US	Contextual	Maintaining American Leadership in Artificial Intelligence	Executive Order	Executive Office of the President	2019
7	US	Contextual	Promoting the Use of Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence in the Federal Government	Executive Order	Executive Office of the President	2020
8	US	Contextual	Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights	National AI Strategy	Executive Office of the President	2022
9	US	Contextual	Algorithmic Accountability Act of 2022	Legislative Proposal	United States Congress	2022
10	US	Contextual	DEEP FAKES Accountability Act	Legislative Proposal	United States Congress	2019

No.	Region	Category	File Name	Type	Author/Publisher	Issue Date
11	US	Contextual	18 U.S.C. § 1831 et. seq. PROTECTION OF TRADE SECRETS	Law	United States Congress	1996
12	US	Discursive	Copyright Protections for Press Publishers	Report	US Copyright Office	2022
13	US	Discursive	The Information Needs of Communities: The Changing Media Landscape in a Broadband Age	Report	Federal Communications Commission	2011
14	US	Discursive	Stop the Presses? Newspapers in the Digital Age	Report	Congressional Research Service	2022
15	US	Discursive	Public Views on Artificial Intelligence and Intellectual Property Policy	Report	United States Patent and Trademark Office	2020
16	US	Primary	Previous Correspondence ID: 1-5GB561K, Registration # VAu001480196 (2023).	Case	US Copyright Office	2023
17	US	Primary	Correspondence ID 1-3ZPC6C3; SR#1-7100387071 (2022).	Case	US Copyright Office	2022
18	US	Primary	Naruto v. Slater, et al., no. 16-15469 (9th Cir. 23 April 2018).	Case	United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit	2018
19	EU	Primary	Directive on the harmonisation of certain aspects of copyright and related rights in the information society ('InfoSoc Directive')	Law	The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union	2001
20	EU	Primary	Directive on the legal protection of computer programs ('Software Directive')	Law	The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union	2009

No.	Region	Category	File Name	Type	Author/Publisher	Issue Date
21	EU	Primary	Directive on the legal protection of databases ('Database Directive')	Law	The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union	1996
22	EU	Primary	Directive on copyright and related rights in the Digital Single Market ('DSM Directive')	Law	The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union	2019
23	EU	Contextual	Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market for Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC (Digital Services Act)	Law	The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union	2022
24	EU	Contextual	Regulation (EU) 2022/1925 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 September 2022 on contestable and fair markets in the digital sector and amending Directives (EU) 2019/1937 and (EU) 2020/1828 (Digital Markets Act)	Law	The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union	2022
25	EU	Contextual	Amendment of the Guidelines for Examination in the European Patent Office 2019	Guidelines	European Patent Office	Updated 2023
26	EU	Discursive	Trends and developments in artificial intelligence: challenges to the intellectual property rights framework: final report	Report	European Commission	2020
27	EU	Contextual	European Patent Office decision of 27 January 2020 on EP 18 275 163 and European Patent Office decision of 27 January 2020 on EP 18 275 174	Case	European Patent Office	2020

No.	Region	Category	File Name	Type	Author/Publisher	Issue Date
28	EU	Contextual	Case C-05/08 Infopaq International v Danske Dagblades Forening (2009) ECLI:EU:C:2009:465 (Infopaq)	Case	Court of Justice of the European Union	2009
29	EU	Contextual	Case C-145/10 Eva-Maria Painer (2011) ECLI:EU:C:2011:798 (Painer)	Case	Court of Justice of the European Union	2011
30	EU	Primary	Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down harmonised rules on Artificial Intelligence (Artificial Intelligence Act) and amending certain Union legislative acts, COM/2021/206 final	Legislative Proposal	European Commission	2021
31	EU	Contextual	Communication from the Commission to The European Parliament, The European Council, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of The Regions Coordinated Plan on Artificial Intelligence, Com/2018/795 Final	Policy	European Commission	2018
32	EU	Contextual	Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Fostering a European approach to Artificial Intelligence, COM (2021) 205 final	Policy	European Commission	2021

<b>No.</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>File Name</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Author/Publisher</b>	<b>Issue Date</b>
33	EU	Contextual	Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Making the most of the EU's innovative potential an intellectual property action plan to support the EU's recovery and resilience, COM/2020/760 final	Policy	European Commission	2020
34	EU	Contextual	Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the European democracy action plan, COM/2020/790 final	Policy	European Commission	2020
35	EU	Contextual	Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions a European strategy for data, COM/2020/66 final	Policy	European Commission	2020
36	EU	Contextual	Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on European data governance (Data Governance Act), COM/2020/767 final	Legislative Proposal	European Commission	2020
37	EU	Contextual	Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on harmonised rules on fair access to and use of data (Data Act), COM/2022/68 final	Legislative Proposal	European Commission	2022

No.	Region	Category	File Name	Type	Author/Publisher	Issue Date
38	EU	Contextual	Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a common framework for media services in the internal market (European Media Freedom Act) and amending Directive 2010/13/EU, COM/2022/457 final	Legislative Proposal	European Commission	2022
39	EU	Contextual	Communication From the Commission to The European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Europe's Media in the Digital Decade: An Action Plan to Support Recovery and Transformation, COM/2020/784 final	Policy	European Commission	2020
40	EU	Contextual	Charter of Fundamental Rights of European Union	Policy	The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union	2010
41	China	Primary	Copyright Law of the People's Republic of China (中华人民共和国著作权法)	Law	The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China	Promulgated in 1990, amended in 2020, came into effect in 2021
42	China	Primary	The Implementing Rules for the Copyright Law of the PRC (著作权法实施条例)	Regulation	The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China	Promulgated in 1991, amended in 2002

No.	Region	Category	File Name	Type	Author/Publisher	Issue Date
43	China	Primary	Copyright Law of the People's Republic of China (2010 Amendment)	Law	The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China	2010
44	China	Primary	Shenzhen Tencent Computer System Co., Ltd. v. Shanghai Yingxun Technology Co., Ltd. ((2019) Yue 0305 Min Chu 14010)	Case	Shenzhen Nanshan Court	2019
45	China	Contextual	Beijing Intellectual Property Court (2017) Jing 73 Min Zhong No. 797 Civil Judgment. April 2, 2020	Case	Beijing Intellectual Property Court	2017
46	China	Contextual	New Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan 2017 (新一代人工智能发展规划)	National AI Strategy	China State Council	2017
47	China	Contextual	Shenzhen Qicedie Cultural Creativity Co. Ltd. v. Hangzhou Metaverse Technology Co. Ltd (Zhe 0192 Minchu No. 1008 (2022))	Case	Hangzhou Internet Court	2022
48	China	Contextual	Regulations on Administration of Algorithmic Recommendation in Internet Information Service (互联网信息服务算法推荐管理规定)	Regulation	Cyberspace Administration of China	2022
49	China	Contextual	Regulations on Administration of Deep Synthesis in Internet Information Service (Draft for Comment) (互联网信息服务深度合成管理规定 (征求意见稿))	Legislative Proposal	Cyberspace Administration of China	2022
50	International	Contextual	Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works	International Treaty	Berne Convention	Adopted in 1886, amended in 1979
51	International	Contextual	Beijing Treaty on Audiovisual Performances	International Treaty	World Intellectual Property Organization	2012

<b>No.</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>File Name</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Author/Publisher</b>	<b>Issue Date</b>
52	International	Contextual	Rome Convention for the Protection of Performers, Producers of Phonograms and Broadcasting Organizations	International Treaty	World Intellectual Property Organization	1961
53	International	Contextual	Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights ('TRIPS Agreement')	International Treaty	World Trade Organization	1994
54	International	Contextual	WIPO Copyright Treaty	International Treaty	World Intellectual Property Organization	Adopted in 1996, amended in 2005, came into effect in 2017
55	International	Discursive	WIPO Technology Trends—Artificial Intelligence	Report	World Intellectual Property Organization	2019





## AI, News, and the State

*AI, News, and the State: Reinstitutionalising Journalism in Global China's Algorithmic Age* explores global power shifts and institutional struggles arising from AI's integration into news production and distribution, with a focus on China and comparative insights from the US and EU. Bridging journalism studies, science and technology studies (STS), political economy, and legal analysis, this dissertation examines how AI is embedded in journalistic practices, media governance, and legal frameworks across divergent political systems. Adopting a critical political economy perspective, the work investigates how AI reconfigures power dynamics between media actors, tech firms, and the state. Focusing on journalism labour, media texts, platformisation, and copyright regimes, it analyses the adaptation of journalists to AI tools and the global race to govern generative technologies. This study provides a multi-level critique of journalism's reinstitutionalisation under algorithmic conditions, shedding light on its implications for editorial autonomy, democratic values, and public accountability. It provides critical insights for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers seeking to understand the intersections of media, technology, and power in the algorithmic age.

ISBN 978-91-7867-574-6 (print)

---

ISBN 978-91-7867-575-3 (pdf)

---

ISSN 1403-8099

---

DOCTORAL THESIS | Karlstad University Studies | 2025:21

---

# AI, NEWS, AND THE STATE: REINSTITUTIONALISING JOURNALISM IN GLOBAL CHINA'S ALGORITHMIC AGE

explores global power shifts and institutional struggles arising from AI's integration into news production and distribution, with a focus on China and comparative insights from the US and EU. Bridging journalism studies, science and technology studies (STS), political economy, and legal analysis, this dissertation examines how AI is embedded in journalistic practices, media governance, and legal frameworks across divergent political systems. Adopting a critical political economy perspective, the work investigates how AI reconfigures power dynamics between media actors, tech firms, and the state. Focusing on journalism labour, media texts, platformisation, and copyright regimes, it analyses the adaptation of journalists to AI tools and the global race to govern generative technologies. This study provides a multi-level critique of journalism's reinstitutionalisation under algorithmic conditions, shedding light on its implications for editorial autonomy, democratic values, and public accountability. It provides critical insights for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers seeking to understand the intersections of media, technology, and power in the algorithmic age.



---

DOCTORAL THESIS | Karlstad University Studies | 2025:21

---

ISBN 978-91-7867-574-6 (print), 978-91-7867-575-3 (pdf)

---