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INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Ingrid Volkmer
Kasim Sharif

RISK JOURNALISM BETWEEN
TRANSNATIONAL POLITICS
AND CLIMATE CHANGE



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Risk Journalism
between Transnational
Politics and Climate
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The Palgrave Macmillan Series in International Political Communication
ISBN 978-3-319-73307-4 ISBN 978-3-319-73308-1 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73308-1>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017964496

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Cover design by Akihiro Nakayama

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Dedicated to the memory of Ulrich Beck, a mentor, colleague—and friend

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Introduction

Over the past years, the transnational debate of climate change has shifted. While only two decades ago, climate change was seen as a future risk of melting polar glacier caps, rising sea levels of oceans and implications of CO₂ emissions on the environment, these processes of planetary destruction are today significant—climate change has become not only a reality but also a catastrophe which requires urgent policy approaches to minimize further implications on a global scale.

Today, the transnationally highly politicized climate change debate focuses on concrete policy measures, such as processes of intergovernmental collaboration, global climate governance, dimensions of political environmental agency, accountability and legitimacy as well as ‘green’ civic identity. In other words, the debate is shifting away from national angles towards a new trans-societal policy terrain aiming to manage not ‘just’ an ambiguous globalized ‘risk’ (Beck 2009) emerging ‘in the future’ but to somehow control a concrete crisis of—as it seems—already severe environmental destruction.

Due to this matter of urgency, not only climate change ‘as such’ but climate governance is now moving into the focus of a world society to establish policy debates in new spheres beyond traditions of national/international relations. Governments of all world regions are forced to closely collaborate in a new policy dimension of equal interdependence

across societies. It is a new perspective of a trans-societal political domain which already begins to produce policy measures. These are now less addressing the territorially ‘bounded’ national climate crisis but, in a new perception which politicizes globalized dense risk scenarios, the interdependence between phenomena.

It is also a new policy arena as it broadens the scope of actors to include multi-level stakeholders, policymakers, activists and citizens across societies—from industrialized countries and small Pacific island nations, from developing and developed world regions and all types of societies, democratic, authoritarian and so-called ‘failed’ states who specifically suffer from the implications of the climatic crisis. The traditional nationally oriented paradigm of domestic/foreign policy and even of international relations are more and more replaced by ‘horizontal’ public policy domains, emerging as trans-societal axes of global/local or local/local or, as cities in Indonesia are facing the same crises as cities in Mexico, Spain and Saudi Arabia, even city/city governance across all types of societies.

The need to shift from a national perspective to such a ‘horizontal’ trans-societal angle is also—and we should say: specifically!—important in the field of climate change journalism, as journalists are becoming ‘actors’ in broadened global climate policy domains. In today’s advanced stage of environmental crisis, climate change journalism can simply no longer be seen as ‘just’ a thematic ‘add-on’ or a side field of national/foreign journalism where—as various studies show—journalists in Western and non-Western regions struggle to somehow ‘squeeze’ at least some climate change stories into the daily news ‘beat’ format of traditional domestic/foreign journalism of, for example, national media. Climate change stories are—except for the coverage of important international conferences—seen as ‘slow’ news and are sidelined, appear in ‘weak’ frames in comparison with the highly dynamic daily ‘breaking’ news flows.

However, we have to perceive climate change journalism as a new journalistic field which requires more attention in journalism studies worldwide. It is a new journalism field which has—given the intensity of the politicized globalized interdependence of climate policy domains—an important public role as ‘communicator’ of the complexity of the cosmopolitan reality of climate change. Climate change journalism is no longer ‘just’ about addressing ‘issues’ but communicates the cosmopolitan reality of climate crises, and global risk governance

to critically engage with measures of legitimacy and accountability of these global policy terrains again in a cosmopolitan perspective.

Although the spheres of communication and journalism are drivers of ‘risk’ awareness—for example, through the ‘magnifying’ of climate crises, peer-to-peer viral communication via social media, through big data and digital interactions across societies—climate change journalism and the larger field of what we might call ‘risk’ journalism are still on the periphery of journalism studies.

Journalism dealing with globalized ‘risk’ is mainly understood (and assessed) in the domains of domestic/foreign reporting. In consequence, conceptual frameworks of the role of journalism in such a globalized risk arena, methodologies and methods are aligned with the traditions of journalism research which emerged at the time of national mainstream media. While, more than a decade ago, some journalism scholars already made attempts to emphasize the crucial need for new methodological debates to identify the dimension of journalism in globalized landscapes and suggested a focus on the ‘global journalist’ (Reese 2001), on ‘cosmopolitan’, ‘risk’ communication (Cottle 2006) and the conceptualization of transnational dimensions of ‘risk’ (Berglez 2008) and global public spheres (Volkmer 2014), these approaches have never reached the main research agenda of journalism studies.

The majority of studies of climate change journalism have a national scope, even in international comparison of national journalism. As studies build on methodological traditions of national journalism and mainly address the output of mainstream media, such as national newspapers, it is not surprising that research is mainly news output oriented and identifies the way how national mainstream (print) media frame climate change and define the agenda in national contexts. Most studies have a focus on the USA and European countries (e.g. Brossard et al. 2004; Boykoff 2007a, b). A frequently adopted approach—specifically relating to transnational debates—is to assess the national coverage of meetings of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Overall, it seems—with very few exceptions—that (1) a focus on the Western world or (2) a comparison with Western countries by including a few developing countries (e.g. Midtun et al. 2015; Brueggemann and Engesser 2017) is still dominating the research agenda in Europe and the USA. Without doubt, nationally oriented studies have produced important insight into national climate change debates and the way how

globalized policies are reflected along a national governance agenda at a time when Western nations took a lead in globalized climate change policy. However, we are now at a phase of heightened globalized interdependent climate change crises in a new domain of intense globalized climate governance and multi-stakeholder interaction on a globalized level which is developing policy frameworks for all societies. In the contours of such an emerging interdependent policy regime, the dominance of Western countries in journalism research can only produce a one-dimensional risk perception which now needs to be broadened to assess the ‘reflexivity’ of risk perception across other world regions.

Of course, a reason for the dominance of Western world regions in empirical research of climate change journalism is the relative silence of journalism scholars from non-Western regions which was the case until a few years ago. This silence was caused by the fact that climate change was not on the public agenda of some developing regions until a few years ago. The current increasing awareness among researchers of developing regions is related to a new inclusive policy approach of the IPCC requiring measures of all world regions to tackle the crisis. As climate change governance is now becoming a key domain for all societies, journalism scholars from developing regions are beginning to assess climate change journalism and—not surprisingly!—these studies reveal quite a different ‘reflexive’ dimension of risk perception and understanding of climate change as a journalistic field.

For example, scholars from Argentina (Mercado 2012), Uganda (Semujju 2013), Fiji (2015), China (Han et al. 2017) and Bangladesh (Rhaman 2016) tend to move away from a ‘media output centric’ view in order to assess the larger complexity of climate change journalism and relate climate change policies to sustainable societal development and progress. Studies address, for example, the links between transnational NGOs and their influence on the journalistic news agenda, such as in South Africa (Kwenda 2013). A study from Bangladesh argues that journalists, covering climate change, need to adopt new roles as societal ‘actors’ to actively interrogate in the political process of ‘social change’ and journalists need to be ‘ready to move beyond the professional mindset of the distant observer and neutral reporter to intervene in any situation that requires action’ (Das 2012, p. 228).

To begin to reposition the field, it might be useful first of all to look across disciplinary borders as this debate requires interdisciplinary approaches. An interdisciplinary debate as other disciplines, such

as political science and sociology, policy domains addressing ‘risk’ and globalized interdependence of diverse risk formations—from climate change to migration and terrorism—are conceptualized as new domains of world politics (e.g. Albert 2016) in the parameter of a world society paradigm.

For example, specific approaches in political science address new formations of environmental security or—in the context of conceptualizing new types of globalized imbalances—a ‘growing ecological disconnect- edness and disembeddedness between people and places’ which results in an ‘environmental load displacement’ from the North to the South (Christoff and Eckersley 2013, p. 19). More recent debates relate globalized ‘risk’ interdependence to migration processes and a call for a new policy angle as an outcome of climate change (Froehlich and Bettini 2017) others emphasize the new role of cities and ‘urban governance’—in regions of the global North and South (Castan Broto 2017).

In sociology, the conceptualization of globalized interdependence of ‘risk’ debates is quite advanced. Sociological debates of relativistic ‘globalization’ began in the 1970s and fully emerged in the early 1990s. For example, the interdependence of humanitarian crises was understood as a dimension of complex ‘global humanity’ and theorized in the interdependence of ‘glocalization’ (Robertson 1992) some decades ago. A decade later and due to the increasing densities of transnational communication processes and a turn to globalized epistemology which has not been adopted in communication and journalism studies, Robertson highlighted the shift towards an epistemic globalized, yet, relativistic notion of ‘world consciousness’ (Robertson and Inglis 2004). The notion of the epistemic dimensions of ‘world consciousness’ and the concern for humanity allowed to set the stage for more specific debates, such as the process of ‘cosmopolitanization’ of societies (Beck 2008) and a globalized ‘outlook’ (Beck 2009) which served in sociology as new paradigmatic orientation points for overcoming the traditions of ‘modernity’. Given the advanced stage of the sociological debate in these areas, it is not surprising that recently another paradigmatic reorientation of the entire field of sociology towards global environmental sociology as a completely new conceptual terrain has been suggested. Such a new discipline of global environmental sociology is seen as ‘unified around the world in terms of the themes that are studied and the theories that are applied and developed—in short, it is a ‘common epistemology and methodology’ as the observation of a place-based divergence

in sociological approaches to (global) environmental challenges seem an oxymoron' (Lidskog et al. 2015, p. 340).

Communication and journalism studies need to similarly engage in broader methodological debates of 'risk' interdependence beyond the nation state to be able (1) to assess and (2) conceptualize the emerging spheres of transnational risk journalism, unfolding as trans-societal axes of 'reflective'—communicative—interdependence (Volkmer 2014) in public discourses of a world society.

This is important as today's transnationally politicized sphere of climate change journalism is situated on the intersection between globalized policies which, given the recent advances of the IPCC, are now becoming the key legitimizing force for national governance and local publics. In this sense, journalists of developed and developing regions—both regions are now fully included in globalized climate change mitigation in United Nations Panels—are called upon to produce the complicated narrative for legitimacy and accountability of globalized policy formations for local publics.

Furthermore, methodological debates need to include scholars from developing regions to understand their specific 'reflexive' perception of globalized risks, such as climate change. The methodological nationalism as a dominant framework of journalism research and—specifically—the adoption of methodological internationalism as a normative approach to international research has been critically assessed (Rantanen 2010, 2013) as an extension of methodological nationalism. We take this argument further and suggest a shift from methodological internationalism to methodological interdependence which is necessary to open up a new 'risk' journalism research field.

We need to assess not only the way how social media, big data and other digital sites set the agenda in newsroom practices but require approaches to identify the individual 'logic' of climate change journalists positioned not in the national boundedness but between a 'local place' and a globalized risk sphere. What is required are approaches which allow to assess the 'reflexive' process of climate change journalism across societies no longer with a national focus but conceptualized as being embedded in transnational interdependent public spheres.

Recently, attempts have been made to address the need for a significant methodological revision of climate change journalism research. Specifically, the Scandinavian scholars Olausson and Berglez suggest a focus on three methodological shifts to transform the entire field of

climate change journalism research: (1) a ‘discursive’ shift—to move away from mainly quantitative studies and the traditional focus on linear ‘content’ towards an interrelated methodology relating ‘production’ and ‘content’ to the larger ‘discourse’; (2) an ‘interdisciplinary’ shift—to engage in conceptual debates with other disciplines; and (3) an ‘international’ shift—to reflect ‘a more diverse and complex understanding of news reporting globally’ (Olausson and Berglez 2014, p. 250).

Our work builds on Olausson and Berglez proposal (2014) of a conceptual shift of climate change journalism research but also on Gibson et al.’s call for a research focus on climate change journalists. Gibson et al. argue that while ‘much research has explored the content of global warming and its impact on audiences’, only ‘a few studies have examined one of the most important *producers* of global warming information—science and environmental journalists’ (Gibson et al. 2016, p. 418) which is ‘an unfortunate oversight’ as journalists have a central position in an epistemic sphere linking ‘scientific research, journalism and public knowledge’. Climate change journalism is a new dimension of journalism which shapes ‘professional practices and norms of science and environmental journalists’ and—so the authors argue—requires more knowledge how these ‘norms shape the production of climate change’ (Gibson et al. 2016, p. 419).

Taking these arguments further, we propose a ‘reflexive’ turn through a focus on the journalist who we understand as a ‘cosmopolitan actor’ within horizons of interconnected ‘risk’ publicness, enabled by digital communication. As Beck argued ‘large scale risks cut across the self-sufficiency of cultures, languages, religions and systems as much as through the national and international agenda of politics’ (Beck 2009, p. 60) as ‘global risks activate and connect across borders of countries who otherwise don’t want to have anything to do with one another’ (Beck 2009, p. 61).

A focus on methodological interdependence and a ‘reflexive’ turn of not only climate change journalism research but also ‘risk’ journalism scholarship tackles in our view three major transformations in journalistic practice: (1) the journalistic engagement in ‘fluid’ webs of data, which situate journalistic practice in transnational discourse arenas; (2) the increased involvement of journalists from developing countries who operate as actors in transnationally interdependent spheres; and (3) a focus on subjective journalistic perceptions of the increased globalized interconnected ‘risk’ dimension.

This book suggests a shift to what we describe as methodological interdependence and a focus on the epistemic sphere of risk ‘reflexivity’ among journalists by proposing a methodology of ‘cosmopolitan relational loops’ as an approach to assess the way how journalists engage with the sphere of global risk policy and local risk publics. It is a methodology which is suited for comparative research of the epistemic ‘reflexive’ dimension of ‘risk’ journalism across societies.

Based on $n = 51$ qualitative semi-structured interviews with journalists in Pakistan, a rarely investigated South Asian developing region, our study adopts the approach of methodological interdependence to assess the ‘reflexive’ practice—the trans-societal interdependent spheres in which journalists of English and Urdu language media engage and how they ‘perceive’ and ‘construct’ climate change within these specific interdependent ‘risk’ horizons—and situate themselves in globalized risk discourses. Key questions arise how journalists ‘reflexively’ operate within such in a globalized communicative ‘matrix’ of unlimited content spaces, how they select sources, how they perceive and construct ‘risk’, how they rationalize ‘validation’ and ‘verification’ and how they engage with these data fields to ‘make sense’ of climate change.

Findings show that journalists seem to take on roles of actors to construct the globalized dimension of climate change through their specific engagement in individually constructed discursive ‘scales’ which we conceptualize as thematic ‘arenas’, ‘actors’ and ‘communicative spaces’. The conceptual focus on cosmopolitan relational scales and the epistemic ‘horizons’ of local journalists within such an interconnected globalized ‘risk’ sphere is understood as an approach of methodological interdependence.

Outcomes of this study show that the construction of climate change is neither situated in the ‘local’ nor ‘global’ or ‘transnational’ sphere but our study reveals the dynamic ‘transactional’ sphere of continuous interconnectivity with highly diverse climate actors.

Overall, the book aims to contribute to the methodological debate of ‘risk’ journalism and to the much-needed scholarship of ‘inclusive’ comparative research in a globalized ‘fluid’ journalistic terrain—across developed and developing regions.

The study in Pakistan was part of a larger study on ‘Journalists as Cosmopolitan Actors’, directed by Ingrid Volkmer which constituted a project of the consortium ‘Methodological cosmopolitanism in the laboratory of climate change’. Kasim Sharif has conducted the study in

Pakistan. The consortium was funded by a grant from the European Research Council (2012–2014) and directed by Ulrich Beck, University of Munich, until his—much too early—death on 1 January 2015.

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Risk Journalism—In Contexts of Trans-societal Interdependence

The term ‘climate change’ refers to a variation in the earth’s temperature, and global climate policy aims to negotiate the urgent need to restrict the process of planetary warming. While climate change can be caused by natural processes such as solar radiation, mountain building or continental drifts, the term mostly refers to ‘anthropogenic climate change’, caused by human industrial activities which are drastically changing all types of natural environmental patterns. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), established in 1988, and the 195 countries involved define climate change as ‘a change in the state of the climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity’.

However, while the dimension of climate change became a specific focus of journalism research in the USA, Britain and other European countries in the late 1990s, first notions of an emerging globalized environmental crisis already appeared as a journalistic theme in the 1970s. The international publication of the report *Limits to Growth* by the ‘Club of Rome’, a think tank of scientists of different disciplines as well as NGOs, raised the international attention of policymakers, citizens and journalists concerned with a new type of crisis only visible on a global scale: the industrial pollution producers of the global North, overpopulation in the global South and the worldwide exploitation of natural resources and a prediction of food and water scarcity for the next generations.

The publication of the report and the new ‘globalized’ perspective on natural resource capacities due to the human destruction of the natural environment resulted in a new perception of environmental ‘crisis’ among the general public and journalists mainly in Western countries. Journalists in the USA and in Europe began to replace the traditional frames of covering ‘the environment’, shifting from a focus on ‘conservation’ of national parks to new critical frames of a new thematic field, such as globalized natural resource politics. This shift was further enhanced by the oil crisis and triggered OPEC oil embargo in 1973 which also revealed the limits of access to unlimited oil capacities to fuel Western industrial growth. Journalists in the USA began to broaden the news agenda and politicize news frames towards the ‘four P’s’: pollution, pesticides, population and people’s habits (Schoenfeld et al. 1979, p. 39). All of a sudden, journalists addressed national environmental resource governance, i.e. issues of ‘justification’, ‘accountability’ and ‘legitimacy’ of national environmental policy in the light of first contours of a looming globalized crisis. As is argued at the time (Schoenfeld et al. 1979), journalists are key actors in these debates and need to take on roles as national ‘claim maker’ and an ‘active role in interpretation’ as well as in ‘constructing social reality’ (Schoenfeld et al. 1979, p. 39). This is necessary as the traditional roles and the ‘dispersion of reporters by territory, institutionalized specialization and topic mirrors the format of the newspaper itself’. However, environmental news does not fit the ‘standard format’ where ‘unecologically nothing’ is ‘connected to anything’ and readers saw ‘the environment in unrelated categories’ (Schoenfeld et al. 1979, p. 54). Despite the strong national journalistic focus due to the dominance of national mass media at the time, Schoenfeld’s notion of journalists as active ‘claim maker’ in a scope of a new social reality of a globalized environmental crisis already aimed to conceptualize environmental journalism as a new field where journalists can no longer take on ‘neutral’ roles but need to be engaged in the definition of a globally interrelated crisis.

A second phase of climate change journalism research began in the 1980s when news media in the USA and the UK focused on the issue of ‘global warming’ partially caused by the reality of temperature rise and drought in the USA and an increasing public awareness of a globalized environmental perspective that ‘global warming’ is ‘happening’. Throughout this period, journalism research began to mainly assess the coverage in national print media and, as Anderson (2009) notes, only one study included US television networks in the period

between 1990 and 1999 and counted only about 100 news stories about global warming during a time period of nine years (Anderson 2009, p. 167).

In the following years, studies diverted to the content side—to news output—to address the new emphasis on environmental and ‘climate change’ frames and the thematic agenda of national news content, while only a few related to news values of journalists (e.g. Brossard et al. 2004; Boykoff 2007a, b). However, during this period, journalism research was mainly conducted in the USA and Britain, however, some early studies addressed the broad field of environmental crisis also began to emerge in Australia, New Zealand, Middle East, Asia, Eastern Europe and South Africa (Boykoff and Roberts 2008, p. 39).

The third phase could be described by Neverla’s (2008) term of ‘climatic turn’, a phase where the notion of climate change became the overarching normative paradigm for the incorporation of all types of environmental crises in the journalistic agenda.

However, the term ‘climatic turn’ can also be understood as a new phase with a focus on the ‘coverage’ (1) not only of climate ‘issues’ but also of climate ‘action’ by NGOs and civic protests. Furthermore, (2) it is a time where journalism research began to address discursive angles as ‘sceptics’ and ‘believers’ and the salience of climate change ‘values’ in an international comparison of national news of Western and a few non-Western countries (e.g. Boyce and Lewis 2009; Painter 2013; Midtun et al. 2015). In addition, this third phase of the ‘climatic turn’ is characterized by (3) national journalism research which now assessed the national coverage of the meetings of the U.N. Climate panel conferences which—starting with the U.N. conference in Copenhagen, 2009—gained increasing attention in national public spheres and set a new ‘globalized’ policy agenda in national discourse.

However, the ‘climatic turn’ cannot only be related to such a thematic and international broadening of research of national climate change journalism. It is important—and often overlooked in climate journalism debates—that during this period, beginning around 2008, larger shifts in climate governance and policies emerged. The shift might be—at first sight—outside of the field of journalism research, but it is important to realize that these are processes which have begun to transform the climate change debate from a national sphere to a new paradigm of globalized interdependence of climate change policy and, thus, constitute important parameter, new sets of sign posts, for climate change journalism.

Sign posts which demarcate climate change as an interdependent crisis reality. A reality which requires (1) new types of dense global policy measures and (2) journalism within such a globalized public territory.

For example, it is important to consider the stages of global climate governance and ‘inclusion’ in the different phases of mitigation processes of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which extend the governance scope the public debate of climate policy including now all types of societies. This phase of ‘inclusion’ in global climate policy began specifically with the IPCC conference in Copenhagen 2009 where all countries and society types, from democratic to autocratic societies, economically developed and developing, large and small, central and peripheral regions, such as the Marshall Islands, were—never mind their geographic, geopolitical or economic position—equally incorporated into the final accord and held responsible for defending climate change.

These are important shifts in the broader parameter of climate change journalism, indicating an ‘inclusive turn’ which set the stage for a new transnational discursive sphere of climate change now stretching across all societies as a key terrain of climate change journalism.

Specifically, three dynamics which reset the parameter for climate change journalism are important drivers of new epistemic scopes of trans-societal risk interdependence:

From the ‘climatic’ turn to the ‘inclusive’ turn: three dynamics transforming the globalized climate change discourse

(1) The first dynamic relevant to the transformation of the climate change discourse is the full political inclusion of all societies in the policies of the IPCC. This reorientation began in Copenhagen and was fully established on the IPCC meeting in Durban, South Africa, in 2011. While earlier policy frameworks included all types of societies, yet, focused on developed nations in terms of responsibilities in the procedures of climate governance in a two-tier approach, posing commitments mainly on industrialized nations and less on developing nations, the Durban conference changed this policy and inaugurated a new phase of inclusive policy approaches. These triggered an attention to climate change among journalists in developing countries where climate change is emerging as an important policy sector also for sustainable development processes. As has recently been argued—again in political science debates—‘poor’

states can be ‘green’ and, often overlooked in climate change journalism debates, ‘non-Western countries’ are taking a lead in ‘adopting an increasing number of environmental regulations’, and some of the poorer countries have even ‘exceeded the performance of Western countries in some areas’ (Sommerer and Lim 2015, p. 95).

(2) A second characteristic of the ‘inclusive’ turn are public sphere dynamics. It is important to clearly distinguish between the terms of trans- or international and trans-societal interdependence in these contexts. Digital communication and thematic discourse ‘densities’ among citizens of different societies enable a climate change discourse which is no longer mainly ‘national’ but rather thematically focussed on a trans-societal scale. Whereas the terms of trans- and international mainly relate to the traditions of modern nation states (such as in Europe), risk communication dynamics ‘flow’ today across all society types, including so-called ‘failed’ states where mobile ‘smart’ communication enables engagement with all types of risk discourse domains. Such a public dynamic enabled and often driven by social media, and digital interaction enables direct communication with scientists, think tanks, activists, NGOs, etc., across societies within trans-societal ‘fields’ of deliberation (Volkmer 2014). Furthermore, and these are the larger issues to be addressed here, citizens of all societies engage as globalized ‘demos’, taking communicative action, and, for example, engage also with journalists. Both citizens as globalized ‘demos’ and journalists have access to these enlarged dynamics, IPCC debates ‘live’ on Twitter, YouTube clips and Instagram sites of activists from even the remotest sites of Vietnam. This is a discursive process which enables new types of climate change journalism. Journalists are not only ‘claim maker’ in national publics as in Schoenfeld’s et al. (1979) time but—to take Schoenfeld’s term to the next level—have roles as globalized ‘actors’ to engage with a globalized ‘demos’ on a trans-societal scale. Specifically as public spheres now operate in a new ‘logic’ as trans-societal spheres of ‘reflective interdependence’ of civic discourse, climate change or globalized ‘risk’ journalism is positioned in a ‘horizontal’, trans-societal ‘matrix of influence’ (Volkmer 2014) as a communicative field where journalists as ‘actors’, interact with ‘reflectors’ (such as social media debates and ‘forwarding’ and commenting climate change issues), and ‘interlocutors’, such as NGOs and activists who engage in risk discourse. In this sense, journalists are (ideally) operating as ‘actors’ to produce globalized interdependent ‘risk’ debates.

As an outcome of these two dynamics, a third dynamic is emerging which—also often overlooked in journalism debates—relates to the shifting of public accountability and legitimacy of climate governance.

Specifically, the ‘axis of legitimacy’ of climate change policy is relevant here. While the research traditions of national climate change journalism assume a focus of journalism frames and a fourth estate role of journalists to critically reflect the legitimacy of national climate change governance, we argue that this axis of legitimacy is shifting, surpassing national governance, and instead has focus on global climate policy as the key domain and a normative ‘yardstick’ policy to critically reflect all types of regional climate governance processes. This shift towards global policy as a frame for critical reflection of regional processes establishes a new domain of public perceptions of interdependence which constitutes of climate change journalism in a trans-societal spectrum. It should be added that while methodologies in journalism research mainly adopt a national focus, dimensions of fine-lined ‘inter-relations’ within the shifting axis of legitimacy across developing and developed world regions in the sphere of climate change debates are becoming a new focus in other disciplines, such as in sociology. For example, studies begin to reveal the underlying relations in the transformation processes of states towards an ‘environmental state’ (Sommerer and Lim 2015) where, as we argue, the shifting axis of legitimacy constitutes an important driver of such a reorientation.

These three intertwined dynamics cause a transformation from ‘vertical-’ national to ‘horizontal-’ trans-societal perspectives which overcome the traditional distinction of climate debates of Western and non-Western world regions. This distinction is no longer sufficient at a time where climate change caused by the global North and the industrial practices of developing economies of the global South, simultaneously affects the Monsoon season in Bangladesh, floods in Houston and in Italy and sea level rising in the Netherlands and Indonesia. In such an interdependence of ‘risks’, climate change implications are no longer an issue of a ‘foreign’ and ‘domestic’ news agenda where, as Berglez illustrates, journalists have to apply a specific creativity to ‘smuggle’ climate issues into the ‘media logic’ (Berglez 2011) of traditional news genres.

Considering the dynamics outlined above, it seems that the assumption of a territorially bounded national ‘risk’ arena is already becoming porous—and holes are widening fast—specifically as citizens, the national ‘demos’, the voting public itself, are no longer mainly nationally ‘inward’ looking but increasingly aware and are often actively engaging via digital

platforms and social media communication with not only national and international but also highly specific local debates of different climate crisis sites across world regions.

More than a decade ago, it has been argued that boundaries ‘that separate territorial states from one another’ no longer ‘demarcate political spaces based on economic, social, or cultural interests’ as each of these ‘has its own boundaries that in the face of localization and globalization are less and less compatible with the border of states’. Overall, the ‘conception of political space as largely synonymous with territory poses a barrier to theory-building in global politics’ (Ferguson and Mansbach 2004, p. 74) and ‘national space dissolves as the dominant form of political space’ (Albert et al. 2009, p. 18)—just to highlight a few of these debates.

Within such an enlarged non-national ‘political space’, we are experiencing the density of ‘risk’ communication on a globalized scale which is intensifying and emerging as peer-to-peer or citizen-to-citizen communication across world regions: ‘viral’ publics, social media and big data sources contribute to national asymmetries and intensification of disaster, provide ‘live’ access to mitigation processes and even of U.N. debates which are accessible via *Twitter* real-time feeds anywhere in the world with mobile phone access.

We suggest the term of ‘risk journalism’ to signify the broader sphere of climate change journalism, situated in such a non-national axis between globalized governance and the legitimacy of local politics. Similar to the traditional fields of ‘domestic’ and ‘foreign’ journalism, ‘risk journalism’ needs to be acknowledged as a third journalistic field. ‘Risk journalism’ in such a non-national domain relates not only to climate change but—strictly speaking—also to other types of new globalized risks we are facing, ranging from the financial crisis, trans-societal tax evasion which is now in the focus of ‘horizontal’ journalistic consortia, terrorism and migration which also increasingly evolve on the non-national global-local axis.

A recent analysis of 52 national mainstream newspapers in 28 countries in Africa, Europe, Middle East, North America, Oceania and South America reveals that after a peak of the issue in 2010, the great majority of articles addressing ‘Climate Change or Global Warming’ in 2016 are published in Europe, followed by North America and Oceania (Boykoff et al. 2016). In comparison, national newspapers in regions that are most affected, such as countries in Africa and Asia which experience either unusual droughts, water scarcity or flooding, are only now beginning to address the issue. Although this survey can only serve as a very general

‘topic indicator’, it still reveals a huge imbalance of climate change journalism across continents.

It seems that journalists across societies face a twofold dilemma of climate change journalism: (1) to assess the complexity between ‘believers’ and ‘deniers’ to negotiate the ‘issue’ angle in editorial rooms based on the ‘right’ scientific details required for in-depth coverage of a news ‘beat’ which does not follow (2) the normal process of ‘unfolding’ of ‘balanced’ reporting of providing equal coverage of climate change consensus and critical views. An alternative strategy is, as recent studies reveal, a practice of ‘interpretive reporting’. For example, as Brueggemann and Engesser show, journalists of print media in the USA, Germany, Switzerland, the UK and India no longer feel the strict obligation for ‘balanced’ reporting to include climate change disputes but the inclusion of contradictory information depends on the editorial policy of the news outlet which might not require strict ‘balance’ (e.g. Brueggemann and Engesser 2017).

Other studies argue for a completely different assessment of climate change journalism and suggest to move away from content analysis of major news outlets to a perception of climate change journalism entirely within a new journalistic ‘ecosystem’ (Gibson et al. 2016), enabled by interactive digital communication. It is an ‘ecosystem’ in which ‘science and environmental journalists merit scrutiny not only because they occupy a crucial node in the circulation of climate change information, but also because they serve as a sort of “indicator species” with regard to the longterm fate of other beat writers in a quickly changing news ecosystem’ (Gibson et al. 2016, p. 418).

Taking these debates further, i.e. from the traditional methodological approach of climate change journalism research as content analysis of the agenda of mainstream media, on the one hand, and the call for a holistic approach of a journalistic ‘ecosystem’, on the other, we begin our discussion in this chapter through a focus on ‘risk’ journalism within the context of digitally enabled interconnectivity of public spheres.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF CLIMATE CHANGE AS A ‘GLOBALIZED RISK’

In general terms, ‘risk’ relates to ‘uncertainties: possibilities, chances, or likelihoods of events, often as consequences of some activity or policy’ (Taylor-Goodby and Zinn 2006, p. 1). However, from a ‘risk society’

perspective, we need to acknowledge fine-lined distinctions: while ‘risk’ means the advanced speculation of ‘possible future threats’, ‘catastrophe’ is an ‘existing threat within a geographically bounded space’ (Beck 2009, pp. 9–10) for which causes and effects can be ‘determined socially with sufficient precision’ (Beck 2009, p. 52). Thus, the category of risk ‘signifies the controversial reality of the possible, which must be demarcated from merely speculative possibility’ (Beck 2009, p. 52). In brief, climate change is a ‘risk’ because it is based on the possibility of future catastrophe.

Beck (2010, p. 261) argues that news media ‘undoubtedly helped to establish [climate change’s] status as a widely recognized global risk’ (Beck 2009, p. 69). Similarly, Cottle (2009, p. x) highlights a shift of Western news media, from the infrequent scientific reports to the conflicting coverage of climate change sceptics, and from the climate change controversy to the presentation of climate change as a global risk which has led to a growing public awareness of climate change as a globalized ‘risk’ in an international spectrum. Already about ten years ago, a Gallup survey showed that 85% of citizens of 128 countries hold the belief that climate change is a global risk. Public perception surveys at the national level indicate the same trend (Gallup 2009). For instance, 58% of the public in the USA and 80% in Canada are of the view that climate change is a globalized risk (Lachapelle et al. 2012). A National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF), based in Australia, reports on the public perception of climate change risk in the most vulnerable (Australia) and least vulnerable country (UK) and reveals similar trends in both country types in the perception of climate change as globalized risk by 74 and 78% (Reser et al. 2012).

While these surveys mainly relate to national publics, it is important to realize that globalized public engagement not only ‘magnifies’ risks or enables ‘green publics’ but also, in today’s digital terrains, enables effective ‘viral publics’ and ‘transactional’ debates among like-minded citizens in a trans-societal spectrum. These processes are often seen as elements of a national public which is a misconception. Specifically in contexts of climate change, a new type of transactional ‘risk’ deliberations is emerging in digital spheres which is embedded—and driven—by fine-lined networks among citizens in a transnational spectrum. These processes contribute significantly to the perception of climate change as a globalized interconnected risk.

It is important to realize that such a globalized interconnected risk discourse also reflects different epistemic spheres. These have first been addressed in communication theory as dimensions of imperialism, followed by postcolonialism, or neoliberalism. However, it is a shift towards what Robertson already identified in the early 1990s globalization as ‘compression of the world and the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole’ (Robertson 1992, p. 8) which produces new dimensions of interconnectivity.

It is such an emphasis on relativistic dimensions of ‘world consciousness’ as a highly fractured sense of ‘belonging’ to a ‘world’, perceived very differently ‘as such’—depending on local perspectives which also constitute a new field of journalism research within ‘fluid’ interconnected ‘risk’ spheres.

The relativistic dimension of ‘world consciousness’ is further specified in Beck’s work who understands this epistemic dimension not as cosmopolitanism—this is an important distinction!—but rather as a locally fractured view of the ‘world’ as ‘cosmopolitanization’ (Beck 2009) where ‘the world’ is perceived from local views through a lens of globalized ‘risk’ and ‘uncertainties’. The interconnectivity of ‘risk’ and the ‘cosmopolitanization’ (Beck 2009) produced by ‘risk’ awareness are, however, also important methodological dimensions when assessing local journalism engaged with globalized risk.

Furthermore, in political science, these world relations have, already two decades ago, been conceptualized as ‘distant proximities’ as a domain of ‘framgregation’ enabling (vertical) interaction between (globalized) fragmentation and (local) community in its relevance for perception of ‘uncertainty’ and ‘ambiguities’ in the perception of ‘world affairs’ (Rosenau 1970). A theoretical approach has informed specific conceptions of civic identity and agency within the parameter of a global civil society (e.g. Kaldor 2003a, b), as drivers of societal transformation of the nation state (Sassen 2006), human rights debates (e.g. Held and McGrew 2007) and—more recently—the field of world politics within a world society (Albert 2016).

NATIONAL OUTLOOK AND METHODOLOGICAL NATIONALISM IN JOURNALISM RESEARCH

Despite these nuanced interdisciplinary debates addressing not only globalization but also diverse ‘horizontal’ processes of fragmentation of globalization which we describe as ‘scalings’ of globalized interconnectivity,