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*BOOK REVIEWS*

Kristoffer Albris, Karin Fast, Faltin Karlsen, Anne Kaun, Stine Lomborg, and Trine Syvertsen (Eds.)

**THE DIGITAL BACKLASH AND THE PARADOXES OF DICONNECTION**

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Kristoffer Albris, Karin Fast, Faltin Karlsen, Anne Kaun, Stine Lomborg, and Trine Syvertsen's *The Digital Backlash and the Paradoxes of Disconnection* (2024) takes a multidisciplinary approach to examining "The Digital Backlash," a concept that captures the increasing resistance to constant digital connectivity and its social impacts. Published by Nordicom as open-access, the book examines cultural, social, and political responses to digital disconnection across a varied prism of society. The book is divided into four thematic sections: public debates about technology, how digital practices affect work and productivity, the challenges facing youth and families in a tech-saturated world, and the commercialization of disconnection in leisure and tourism. This structure focuses on the central argument that digital disconnection stems from deeper societal concerns over agency, attention, and well-being in our increasingly tech-driven landscape. The editors present the digital backlash as a cultural reaction to the overreach of digital technology, but they also highlight the irony that it still relies on the same corporate infrastructures it seeks to challenge.

The book opens with an introduction that frames the digital backlash as both a cultural movement and a sign of shifting societal values. The editors explain that this backlash isn't one unified movement but a diverse and complex range of reactions to the perceived downsides of digital connectivity. In doing so, *The Digital Backlash and the Paradoxes of Disconnection* establishes itself as an important contribution to media and communication studies, examining the contradictions and complexities of digital life. The introduction lays the groundwork for the sections that follow, each exploring specific aspects of the digital backlash with detailed research and strong theoretical insight.

The first section, *Discourses and Disputes*, focuses on how public and academic discussions about digital disconnection have shifted over recent years. In their chapter, "Techlash or Tech Change? How the image of Mark Zuckerberg changed with Cambridge Analytica", Rasmus Helles and Stine Lomborg examine Danish media's coverage of Mark Zuckerberg and Facebook, using the Cambridge Analytica scandal as a key example of rising criticism toward Big Tech. They argue that this backlash wasn't a sudden, isolated event but rather the result of a gradual change in public attitudes. By placing these critiques within a wider historical and cultural context, Helles and Lomborg question oversimplified views of the techlash, providing a more complex view on its development and significance. Another chapter by Ingrid Forsler, Carina Guyard, and Linus Andersson critiques the heavy reliance on neuropsychological models in research on digital disconnection. They advocate for more interdisciplinary approaches that consider the broader cultural and social aspects of these practices. This contribution emphasizes the need for media scholars to critically engage with the topic, pushing beyond narrow, simplistic views that only focus on individual behavior.

The second section, *Work and Productivity*, explores how digital connectivity shapes modern work practices, showcasing both its possibilities and its limiting effects. For instance, in the chapter, "Disconnection or Hyper-connectivity? Remote Work and Italian South Working," Alessandro Gandini presents a fascinating case study on "south working," a trend where remote workers moved to less urbanized areas in southern Italy during the COVID-19 pandemic. Gandini examines the paradox of this phenomenon, showing how remote work allows people the freedom to escape city life while also increasing their reliance on digital infrastructure. This chapter takes a closer look at how technology shapes work and productivity in today's world.

The third section, *Children and Youth*, focuses on the unique challenges and ethical dilemmas that digital connectivity brings to the lives of young people and families. For example, in her chapter, "Navigating the Moral Imperatives of Parenting in the Age of (Dis)connection," Victoria Andelsman Alvarez examines how Danish parents juggle their children's digital involvement with societal pressures to meet expectations of "good parenting." Her research reveals the conflicting emotions many parents experience about using digital technology in raising their children. They work to balance encouraging digital skills with protecting their kids from the potential harms of excessive screen time. This section explores the personal and ethical dimensions of digital disconnection, linking it to broader discussions about parenting, education, and the well-being of children and teenagers.

Finally, in the section on *Leisure and Recreation*, the authors explore how the digital backlash itself has become a marketable commodity, especially in the leisure and tourism industries. In their chapter, "Revisiting the Past, Being in the Present," Trine Syvertsen and Faltin Karlsen focus on digital-free holiday camps, marketed as chances for people to "reconnect" with themselves and others. They critically examine these camps, questioning the privilege and accessibility tied to such initiatives. Framing these practices within broader neoliberal systems, the authors show how the digital backlash often gets co-opted by market forces, turning it into a consumer-driven trend that deepens social inequalities. This section raises thought-provoking questions about the ethics and real impact of disconnection practices, encouraging the reader to reflect on their own involvement in these patterns.

Methodologically, this work stands out for its variety of methods, including critical discourse analysis, ethnography, computational techniques, and more. This variety highlights the interdisciplinary nature of digital disconnection studies, providing the reader with a well-rounded and thorough understanding of the topic. A particularly valuable theoretical contribution is its framing of disconnection as a spectrum of practices and ideologies rather than a simple binary contrast with connectivity. This perspective allows the editors and contributors to explore the complexities and contradictions of disconnection, challenging simplistic views that portray it as purely liberating or entirely oppositional.

Another key strength of this book is how it critically examines the way digital disconnection has been turned into a commodity within neoliberal paradigms. It highlights trends like the rise of digital detox apps, luxury retreats, and other consumer-driven practices that package well-being and authenticity as products to be sold. By looking closely at these trends, the book encourages the reader to think about the ethical and social justice issues tied to digital disconnection, such as accessibility, privilege, and inequality. This

perspective goes beyond academic discussion, offering real-world insights into practices and policies that shape our digital lives.

All in all, *The Digital Backlash and the Paradoxes of Disconnection* is a breath of fresh air in media and communication studies. It sheds light on the cultural, social, and political dimensions of our digital world – areas that often get overlooked. If you want a deeper understanding of how technology and society influence each other, this book absolutely deserves a spot on your reading list.

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### **INNOVATION THROUGH CRISIS: JOURNALISM AND NEWS MEDIA IN TRANSITION**

Nordicom, University of Gothenburg, 2024, 182 pages

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The book *Innovation through Crisis: Journalism and News Media in Transition* was published in mid-2024 by Nordicom, University of Gothenburg. It is a collection of papers edited by Mona K. Solvoll & Ragnhild Kr. Olsen, which brings the results of numerous researches created as part of the project “Media Innovation Through the Corona Crisis” conducted by BI Norwegian Business School (2020-2021) and funded by the Research Council of Norway.

The Covid-19 virus pandemic was an unprecedented crisis that left its mark on society as a whole. In the chapter “Introduction – The innovation response to the Covid-19 crisis” Mona K. Solvoll & Ragnhild Kr. Olsen describe the media response to the crisis, but also the improvement of value for key stakeholders, as well as the improvement of business operations. In the empirical part of the work, which is part of a wider project carried out from 2020 to 2022, examples of Norwegian news media as well as traditional media during the crisis were processed, and their ability to innovate was analyzed. The aim of the book was to investigate the ability of the Norwegian media to face the challenges during the Covid-19 crisis. Production discontinuity and cost cutting were the common denominator for the newspaper industry, which, in addition to falling sales revenue, was also faced with virtual challenges (pg. 9). In the center of interest is the observation of innovations that can be viewed in several directions, and the authors are interested in innovations that bring value and unity to media organizations as a whole. The selection of the Norwegian media is not accidental, and the description of the economy of this Scandinavian country is presented, which is characterized by a strong public sector and a transparent political system. The broader context of crisis management during the pandemic is also given – from the first measures in 2020 to the announcement of the end of the pandemic in 2023 (pg. 13). Most of the editions are small editions and of a local character, and there are also three strong media groups – Schibsted, Amedia and Polaris.

In chapter 1, "Theoretical perspectives on crisis, resilience and innovation", Ragnhild Kr. Olsen & Mona K. Solvoll provide a normative overview of innovation in journalism with a particular emphasis on the value creation of improvement and novelty. Several blocks of journalistic innovation have been identified: "sources, technology, organization, management, culture and business model" (2024: 19). The authors applied the concept of resilience to understand organizational sensitivity and response to external shocks in the context of threat response. The chapter analyzes the concept of crisis, resilience and innovation during the Covid-19 crisis, and the Norwegian media's response to it. The concept of resilience is predominantly viewed from an economic perspective through three indicators\_ resilience as persistence: business as usual, resilience as adaptation – a turning point and resilience as transformability – radical renewal, and includes different types of innovation: a) innovation as value creation, b) innovation as improvements and c) innovation as novelty (pg. 26-39). Building resilience is viewed through three dimensions: durability, adaptability, and transformability as key indicators of the digital transformation of media.

The media adapted to the crisis by digitizing the newsroom and reorganizing the organizational structure, Mona K. Solvoll points out in chapter 2, "Innovations in resilience strategies during the Covid-19 pandemic". The chapter provides an analysis of research into the perception of innovation among media managers and three recovery strategies: bouncing back, bouncing forward and bouncing beyond (pg. 43). The bouncing back strategy focuses on system resilience and the speed of returning to the original state in order to maintain continuity. Furthermore, the bouncing forward strategy is focused on the organizational ability to move away from the initial shock while maintaining structural stability, and also requires a certain degree of organizational change and innovation. Finally, the bouncing beyond strategy is aimed at changing the system of organizational values (pg. 47). The research part of the work brings in-depth interviews with 24 media managers at the national, local and regional level conducted in January 2021 by email or phone. The success of Norwegian media is reflected in the digital transformation carried out two decades ago, and the Covid-19 crisis has brought out the best in them – serving the public and people in general.

In Chapter 3, "Positive renewal in newsrooms through crisis in crisis", Gudrun Rudningen presents an ethnographic study on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the reorganization of journalistic practices. The research showed that the pandemic was experienced as an opportunity for positive renewal and innovative ways of working, relying on "flexibility, creativity, autonomy and solidarity" (2024: 65). The pandemic affected the news production process, but at the same time, media organizations sought to attract a large number of readers and demonstrate socially responsible business. 15 in-depth interviews were conducted in May 2022 with media workers at different levels of the media organization (managers, journalists, trade unionists) and at different levels of operation (local, regional, national). Most people experienced the pandemic as a trigger for organizational changes with regard to the relocation of work places, but also changes in teamwork. The results showed that the crisis contributed to the search for meaning for most participants. It was also a motivation-boosting event, an event that brought about collective unity, just like the terrorist attacks in Oslo and Utøya in 2011.

Jens Barland & Ragnhild Kr. Olsen in chapter 4 "The digital shift in the news media's revenue streams during the Covid-19 pandemic", analyzes the economic resilience of the Norwegian media, and places a special focus on the change in revenue in the newspaper industry during the crisis. The empirical part of the work brings a combined methodology – a review of secondary revenue data of Norwegian newspapers from 2006 to 2021, as well as reports on the lease of media space from 2019 to 2021, and 5 in-depth interviews with experts from the media industry. The constant changes in measures by the government brought insecurity among tenants of media space, and this resulted in the withdrawal of advertisements that form the lifeblood of newspaper activity. The Norwegian government adopted several measures to encourage the media industry to compensate for the historic decline in advertising revenue, but the strict criteria for awarding grants resulted in a large number of rejected applications (pg. 100).

In chapter 5, "Crisis-driven newsroom innovation", Junai Mtchedlidze investigates the connection between newsroom innovations and newsroom technologies. He states that relying only on technology is not a guarantee of success, but also the method and knowledge of how to apply it. Local knowledge, expertise, cooperation and experience are just some of the indicators that contribute to innovation processes (pg. 110). Understanding the connection between technology and organizational needs is a complex process, but also a key prerequisite for fulfilling innovation cycles. The empirical part of the paper provides a case study based on data obtained from a semi-structured in-depth interview of 12 media workers from four media organizations in Norway. The importance of individual initiatives in innovation processes has been shown – and they most often come from below, from journalists and developers who sometimes take on journalistic tasks, and the prerequisite for cooperation is mutual understanding and open communication.

How Norwegian journalists quickly coped with the rapid transition of remote work by moving the entire newsroom and how it affected their work and the perception of the quality of the same are questions to which answers are offered by Ragnhild Kr. Olsen, Cecile Asker & Maria Konow-Lund in chapter 6, "Exposing telework innovation's value for news workers". In the empirical part of the work, 45 in-depth interviews with Norwegian media participants from all levels (local, regional, national) were analyzed, which enabled a more detailed insight into the positive and negative sides, as well as the long-term issue of sustainability. The authors summarized the advantages and disadvantages of teleworking in three categories (2024: 130): emotional (employee well-being and perception of job satisfaction), functional (work experience in a flexible work environment) and strategic (operating costs, productivity and attractiveness to employees). The results showed that the perception of the value of innovation among media workers is somewhat ambiguous and complex: on the one hand, many possibilities are recognized, from flexible working conditions to emotional benefits, which is a big step forward compared to the expectations of the new generation, and may also be a new strategy. attracting talent to media organizations in the context of providing added value. On the other hand, working from home has proven to be bad for organizational culture in terms of insufficient support and lack of leadership (138-140).

In chapter 7, "The effects of an external crisis on the prioritization of innovations", Arne H. Krumsvik & David L. Francis provide insight into the construct of organizational resilience by exploring the challenges related to strategic decision-making before and after the crisis. Starting from a new research typology – the 8\*2 concept, they seek to investigate the dynamics of decision-making related to media innovations. The concept of 8\*2 innovation includes product service innovation, process innovation, positional innovation, paradigmatic innovation, platform innovation, genre innovation and social innovation. The key question of the empirical part of the paper was how does insisting on innovation really contribute to change? And if so, what type/pattern of change is it? Three clusters were identified: 1) Keep calm and carry on, 2) Polish the product, 3) Go get new revenue (pg. 153-159). The analysis showed that most managers want to improve the market position (do-better) and are more prepared (do-different). But this depends on strategy, leadership, vision, capacities and resources.

Lessons learned from this unexpected crisis Ragnhild Kr. Olsen In the last chapter of the book – Conclusion "Making sense of a crisis" systematized by presenting the main messages of each chapter, they refer to the effects of the crisis, applied strategies, adopted innovations in response to the threat of the pandemic. This is how we see the media's ability to innovate and cope with the Covid-19 crisis, the media's ability to apply different strategies during a crisis, the media's ability to create economic value during a crisis, the media's ability to innovate and respond to the information needs of the audience, the media's ability to create value for employees during the crisis, the manager's new ability to do-better and do-different (pg. 167-173).

The book *Innovation through Crisis: Journalism and News Media in Transition* provides a valuable theoretical framework for studying the effects of crisis and organizational resilience on the example of media organizations. Numerous conducted studies, the results of which are presented in individual chapters, have provided a deeper and more detailed insight into the perception of the crisis by key stakeholders in the media production process – journalists, editors, and managers of leading Norwegian media outlets, thus offering a comprehensive overview of the response to crisis management in the media industry. Furthermore, it is shown how the crisis can stimulate new directions for organizational development by relying on innovation while preserving the basic functions of the media and their identity, as well as acting in the public interest. Successfully implemented digital transformation and strong leadership undoubtedly contribute to an effective response to unexpected threats. The book provides valuable insights for media policymakers by offering an answer to the question of how media organizations function in crisis, but also for current and future media professionals as a guide for future actions. Finally, the book will be indispensable reading material for students of journalism, media and communication studies, and anyone interested in the media production process and media management.

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Kenneth Kobre

**VIDEOJOURNALISM: MULTIMEDIA STORYTELLING FOR ONLINE, BROADCAST, AND DOCUMENTARY JOURNALISTS (2ND EDITION)**

Routledge, 2024, 392 pages

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"As a new breed of videojournalists, you might be called everything from a one-man/woman/person band, a backpack journalist, a multi-media journalist (MMJ), or just a simple straight-forward videojournalist... But then, what's in a name?" Kenneth Kobre's rhetorical question from his updated *Videojournalism: Multimedia Storytelling for Online, Broadcast, and Documentary Journalists (2nd Edition)* immediately tackles challenges faced by today's videojournalists. The field has transformed radically in recent decades since its rise to prominence in the early 2000s, with blurred boundaries between roles, evolving platforms, and relentless demand for content versatility. This revised edition recognizes this evolution, offering a timely and comprehensive guide to videojournalism in a multimedia, mobile-first world.

The quote frames a tension in today's journalism: the expanding scope of the role. What exactly does a journalist do? Or better yet what does a videojournalist do? Once a field dominated by specialists, videojournalism now demands versatility, often requiring one individual to research, shoot, edit, narrate, and publish stories independently. This trend has given rise to terms like "backpack journalist" and "MMJ," signifying the all-encompassing and ever-increasing scope of the work. At the same time, rise of citizen journalism and user-generated content has been raising questions about quality and professionalism. Kobre's book faces these challenges and at the same time provides tools and inspiration for journalists striving to balance technical proficiency with the art of compelling storytelling.

The second edition is thoroughly revised, incorporating over 550 photographs, and 200 related video examples in form of QR codes scattered across the book. Examples like short documentary, *Anatomy of a News Story*, which follows a videojournalist through the process of creating a news package bring theory to life and help readers to connect the dots between foundational principles and real-world practice. With additional insights into mobile journalism, digital distribution, and audience engagement, Kobre ensures the book addresses both traditional formats and the unique demands of platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube.

Chapter 1 of the book "Telling Stories" introduces core concepts of creating compelling nonfiction video stories. It emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between broad topics and tightly focused stories that engage viewers emotionally. The chapter sets a tone for the rest of the book on how to independently produce various types of video content, from short news segments to full-length documentaries, using minimal resources.

Regardless of the type of video content, Kobre and co-authors argue that it is critical to identify a universal theme to anchor journalistic storytelling. Chapter 2 "Teasing out a Theme" illustrates how themes like rivalry, love, loss or adversity can transcend cultural and situational boundaries and can connect with audiences on a human level. This chapter then contrasts styles such as direct cinema or *cinéma-vérité*, where the camera acts as an impartial observer capturing natural dialogue and unscripted moments, with



narrated approaches that provide contextual guidance through voice-overs. Hybrid approaches also emerge, combining narration, interviews, and natural sound to craft cohesive narratives to guide viewers through complex, often fragmented, realities.

Building on the importance of universal themes, Kobre delves into the practical aspects of discovering and shaping compelling stories. Chapter 4 – “Finding a Story” focuses on the creative process of finding interesting narratives in everyday life, from personal interactions to trending topics on social media. Together, these first chapters stress the importance of grounding visual storytelling in relatable, authentic experiences while using the journalist’s ability to observe, inquire, and craft narratives that resonate across audiences and platforms.

Subsequent chapters delve into the technical aspects of video production, from creating a storyboard, pre-production checklists, camera operation, lighting, and sound recording. Kobre emphasizes that technical mastery is critical for storytelling and devotes considerable effort to present these skills in a clear and comprehensive way. This is best illustrated with chapters acting as a detailed guides on choosing the right camera, lenses and microphones in the context of videojournalism.

Audio, often underestimated in video production, is given the attention it deserves in chapter 10. Here, Kobre explains how clean, emotive sound can elevate the storytelling and is essential in every story. He provides practical tips on capturing quality audio in challenging environments and conducting interviews that elicit authentic responses. These skills are critical not only for traditional broadcast journalism but also for livestreaming and virtual interviews – practices that have gained prominence in recent years.

Post-production and video editing as a narrative tool is explored over two chapters and explained how the post-production process shapes the viewer’s experience. Insights are enriched by video examples that demonstrate how careful editing can transform raw footage into compelling narratives.

Kobre’s chapter on ethics tackles the increasingly complex dilemmas faced by videojournalists and other practitioners in a digital-first world. From respecting the privacy of subjects to ensuring accuracy in an era of deepfakes and misinformation, this section, with its examples demonstrates the importance of integrity in videojournalism. Kobre encourages readers to critically engage with these issues, offering a framework for navigating ethical gray areas while upholding professional standards.

Whether working as a solo backpack journalist or within a larger team, Kobre maintains that videojournalist’s goal is to inform, inspire, and engage audiences through compelling visual narratives. This book equips readers with the tools and mindset needed to navigate and succeed in this rapidly changing and dynamic field. Clear identity of videojournalists is still not certain and as roles blur and media platforms proliferate, the profession faces its biggest challenges in maintaining quality and authenticity. While technological advancements have empowered journalists to work independently, they have also introduced new pressures and ethical considerations. Kobre recognizes these tensions and provides a “safe” and comforting place in form of second edition of Videojournalism. Its comprehensive approach, interactive examples and real-world insights, makes it ideal not just for journalism students and aspiring videojournalists but seasoned professionals too. By balancing technical instructions with a deep appreciation for narrative craft and

ethical responsibility, Kobre has created a guide that is as relevant as it is inspiring. In an era of constant innovation, this book reminds us that while the tools and platforms may change, the art of storytelling remains timeless.

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