

# Indigenous journalism, media innovation, and social change

*A review of previous research  
and call for more critical approaches*

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## Abstract

Indigenous journalism can facilitate the inclusion of Indigenous voices in the public sphere, thereby contributing to social change. Contemporary Indigenous journalism is in part facilitated by the introduction and diffusion of paradigmatic media innovations, including the Internet, mobile technology, and social media. Based on a literature review, we investigate how media innovations are understood to facilitate Indigenous journalism and find that few empirical studies directly address this question. Analyses of Indigenous journalism, reaching beyond the potential for increased access to media and for amplification of Indigenous voice, are lacking. Furthermore, little research investigates how the appropriation of new technological affordances influence the production of Indigenous journalism. Our review also indicates that while Indigenous political participation can be facilitated by media innovation, these innovations can also serve to reinforce existing power relations. We submit that more critical analytical approaches are required to investigate how media innovations might facilitate the potential of Indigenous journalism for social change.

**Keywords:** Indigenous journalism, media innovation, social change, Indigenous political participation, marginalisation

## Introduction: The burgeoning field of Indigenous journalism research

During the past twenty years, researchers have explored what they claim to be “a burgeoning field” of Indigenous journalism (Hokowhitu & Devadas, 2013: xvi; see also Hanusch, 2013; Hartley & McKee, 2000). This burgeoning is attributed in part to the introduction, diffusion, and appropriation of paradigmatic innovations in media and communication technologies (Alia, 2010), including the Internet, mobile technology, and social media (Sweet et al., 2013; Alia, 2010). Alia (2010) argues that cell phones have fostered social change in Africa, and that blogs can be used as tools for highlighting

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injustice. Hanusch (2014a: 953) also maintains that media innovations have “allowed Indigenous societies to tell their own stories in culturally specific ways, enabling them to engage in (re)building their own identities”.

It has been argued that Indigenous journalism, as a reaction to mainstream journalism, can play a role in the promotion of social change by facilitating the inclusion of Indigenous voices in the public sphere (Hanusch, 2013; Skogerbø et al., 2019; Sweet et al., 2013). However, the practice of journalism can also reinforce existing power relations (Fussey & Roth, 2020; Golding, 2018; Herman & Chomsky, 2002; McChesney & Nichols, 2010; Waller et al., 2015). Research exploring the marginalisation of Indigenous voices in the public sphere also support this theory. In Scandinavia, for example, coverage of Indigenous affairs has been found to be conflict-oriented and racist, contributing to the exotification and marginalisation of Indigenous communities, cultures, languages, and ways of life (Ijäs, 2012; Sand, 2019; Skogerbø, 2000). Furthermore, research that analyses media innovations problematises the extent to which these innovations facilitate social change (see Ess, 2014; Krumsvik et al., 2019).

The use of the collective concept “Indigenous journalism” to describe the practice of journalism – both *by* and *relating to* Indigenous people – has increased significantly parallel to these developments. The phenomenon this concept refers to is, however, significantly older. Researchers have previously investigated the production of journalism by Indigenous people since at least 1840 (Day, 1990). These investigations usually referred to the practices of specific Indigenous people, for example, Sámi, Māori, or Cherokee journalism; or collective groups, such as Native, Aboriginal, or First Nations journalism. An increasing body of more recent research, however, refers to the concept of Indigenous journalism. A central claim of this research is that a “renaissance” of this practice is occurring, attributed in part to the diffusion and appropriation of paradigmatic media innovations (see Hanusch, 2013; Alia, 2010; Sweet et al., 2013). This growing body of research has not been the subject of a structured review to date; therefore, in this article, we report on a review of this research. Our review aims to identify the status of knowledge on this topic, critically assess the claims that are made, and point to directions for future research.

Based on our review, we argue that research exploring Indigenous journalism needs to take a more critical approach to the ways in which the diffusion and appropriation of media innovations facilitate or constrain Indigenous journalism in practice. We find, for example, that analyses of the process of Indigenous journalism, beyond the potential for increased access to media and for amplification of Indigenous voice, are lacking. Furthermore, little research investigates how new technological affordances might influence the production of Indigenous journalism or related variations in journalistic norms. Research exploring how Indigenous political participation can be facilitated by media innovation also indicates that these innovations can serve to reinforce existing power relations.

We submit that more critical analytical approaches are required to investigate how media innovations might facilitate the potential of Indigenous journalism for social change.

## **Indigenous journalism: What it denotes and how it has been approached**

Indigenous journalism as a field of study is characterised by conceptual disagreement. Krøvel (2017) claims that Gema Tabares Merino introduced the concept of “Indigenous journalism”. Grounded in empirical observations of journalism connected to Indigenous organisations and communities on radio stations and online, Gema Tabares Merino was referring to what she considered to be a relatively new form of journalism developing in Latin America (Krøvel, 2017).

Gema Tabares Merino conceptualises Indigenous journalism as a form of “collective work”, involving “thinking and action” for Indigenous communication (as cited in Krøvel, 2017: 192). It includes three central dimensions:

First, indigenous journalism must respond to the needs of indigenous peoples. Second, the communication must highlight the crisis of the ‘Occident’ and re-value the knowledge and life forms of indigenous peoples as a viable alternative. [Third], the technologies underpinning [Indigenous journalism] must be placed at the service of indigenous life and culture. (Krøvel, 2017: 193)

The “collective work” concept is particularly appropriate, as Indigenous journalism is understood to have developed through local communitarian action that has been further mediated by national and continental meetings, discussions, and networks (Krøvel, 2017).

Related to this, Meadows (2009) has investigated the importance of journalism in representing Indigenous peoples and their affairs for non-Indigenous people. He argues that incorrect, biased, or missing representations of Indigenous peoples reinforce the construction of worldviews based on (mis)information. It is through worldviews that opinions are formed, and these opinions lead to actions. Meadows argues that because of this, many Indigenous peoples have turned their backs on mainstream media and started engaging in their own forms of cultural production (Meadows, 2009).

From a more theoretical perspective, Hanusch (2013) develops five main dimensions to conceptualise and analyse Indigenous journalism: a role in the empowerment of Indigenous people; the ability to offer a counter-narrative to mainstream media reporting; a role in language revitalisation; a role in culturally appropriate reporting; and a watchdog function. Hanusch’s (2013) dimensions of Indigenous journalism have, however, been criticised because they imply an artificial contrasting of Indigenous journalism with other forms of journalism (Todorova, 2016). There is, in fact, significant overlap between the dimensions outlined by Hanusch and what is often referred to as journalism’s ideal types of values (Deuze, 2005), namely public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy, and ethics. The dimension of language revitalisation, however, appears to be unique.

Further complicating matters, research on Indigenous journalism also operationalises the “Indigenous” concept in different ways. The term “Indigenous” is usually used as a political and strategic reference to people who have experienced histories of oppression and marginalisation. According to the World Bank (2021), between 370 and 500 million – or around 5 per cent of the world’s total population – are Indigenous. However, this collective concept masks many differences among and between Indigenous people. For example, groups have distinct names to self-identify, such as “Aboriginal”, “Torres Strait Islanders”, “Māori”, “First Nations”, “Inuit”, or “Sámi”.

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) declines to adopt an official definition, but proposes “a modern understanding”, based on self-identification and acceptance as a community member. At the core of this concept is a requirement to recognise difference, in terms of historical continuity; links to territories and natural resources; social, economic, and political systems; languages; cultures; and power relations (United Nations, 2004). According to Walter and Andersen (2013), it is precisely because of this diversity that the concept does not have an official definition.

Some Indigenous communities have also been conceptualised by Walter and Andersen (2013: 9) as “colonized first world Indigenous Peoples”. These people share colonial histories but are also socially, economically, and politically positioned in colonised first world nations. This builds on Dyck’s (1985) definition of fourth world peoples, who,

- are Indigenous to the lands that form the nation state;
- have had their sovereignty and territory appropriated by settler colonialism;
- are economically and politically marginalized;
- have their Indigenous culture stigmatized by the dominant culture;
- are struggling for social justice and for a right to self-determination and control over their traditional lands and resources; and
- constitute a tiny minority of the population of a nation, contributing to their political powerlessness.

(as cited in Walter & Andersen 2013: 18)

These characteristics do not apply to all Indigenous people; for example, in the Pacific, Samoans, Fijians, and Tongans are Indigenous and dominant groups in their island-states – however, they also identify as Indigenous and are recognised as such.

In spite of these conceptual disagreements, research about Indigenous journalism converges on the principle that it plays a role in social change, whether by promoting collective work and Indigenous forms of life and language, or by facilitating Indigenous participation in the public sphere through empowerment, culturally sensitive reporting, the potential to generate counter-narratives, or a watchdog function. From this starting point, we investigate research-based claims about how the practice that is increasingly conceptualised as “Indigenous journalism” is facilitated or constrained by media innovation.

## **Media innovation and social change**

Research about media innovations investigates change, including what is changing and how novel the change might be. It also investigates the key influences that support or hinder change (Krumsvik et al., 2019). Because media are part of the social ecology, media innovations are understood to both reflect and bring about social change (Bruns, 2014; see also Castells, 2012; Jenkins, 2006). However, media innovation must have some kind of economic or social impact to be considered an innovation (Dogruel, 2013).

Studies of the interrelationship between media innovation and social change emphasise the importance of analysing the socioeconomic and cultural contexts in which

innovations occur (Kannengießer, 2020; Krumsvik et al., 2019; Ní Bhroin, 2015b; Ní Bhroin & Milan, 2020). Earlier research has found, for example, that access to new media does not guarantee participation, as further obstacles for engagement with technology may exist (van Deursen & Helsper, 2015).

Research on media innovations focuses primarily on innovations in journalism and news production, as well as on new opportunities for civic participation. It may therefore provide a useful lens to synthesise our understanding of factors influencing the development of Indigenous journalism.

When investigating innovations in journalism, Belair-Gagnon and Steinke (2020) argue that journalism is a process, where elements of production and consumption – including audience engagement, structure, system, and network – play a role. Related to this, da Silva and Sanseverino (2020) find that digitally native news services establish more meaningful connections with their audiences, which can in turn support business.

At the same time, new technological affordances introduce challenges for the production of journalism. Muindi (2018), for example, explores how Kenyan journalists need to juggle requirements for clarity, balance, and truth with the immediacy and spontaneity of communication on Twitter. Koivula, Villi, and Sivunen (2020) find that although media innovations present new opportunities for sharing ideas in dispersed journalism, they also introduce uncertainty in the creative production process.

With regard to civic engagement, Rendueles and Sádaba, (2019) argue that digitalisation has transformed political participation and citizen mobilisation in diverse and unexpected ways, and that the greatest innovations have taken place in what they call “unconventional political participation”. At the same time, researchers argue that explorations of the relationship between media innovation and social change should not overemphasise the importance of technological transformation, but rather pay attention to sustained power relations and patterns of inequality that prevail (see Fussey & Roth, 2020; Golding, 2018).

We therefore set out to investigate the extent to which research about Indigenous journalism investigates or explains 1) how media innovations introduce change to Indigenous journalism as a process, including its production and consumption, aspects of audience engagement, structure, system, and networks; 2) whether new technological affordances are understood to influence journalistic norms in Indigenous journalism, including requirements for clarity, balance and truth, and collaboration; and 3) how research about Indigenous journalism analyses the role of media innovation in introducing new opportunities for political participation.

## Methodology

Our literature review was conducted in two iterations (October–December 2017 and November 2020). In both instances, we searched for the term “Indigenous journalism”. As previously discussed, the use of this collective concept masks a complex range of differences between and among Indigenous people. However, the rate at which research referring to the concept is published has increased. One indication of this is the number of results generated by our search protocol at each iteration. In October 2017, our search resulted in 137 items; by November 2020, the total number of items had increased to 233 (see Figure 1 for a graphical representation of our search protocol).

**Figure 1** Overview of search protocol

Search A (Oct–Dec 2017)	Search B (Nov 2020)
Google Scholar: 137 items	Google Scholar: 96 additional items (233 items in total: 137 + 96)
↓	↓
Duplicates removed: 125 items remained	Duplicates removed: 92 additional items remained (217 items in total: 125 + 92)
<i>Cross-referenced findings with Web of Science, Nordicom, and Sociological Abstracts: no new results</i>	
↓	↓
Removed theses and publications that were not peer reviewed and not in English: 55 items remained	Removed theses and publications that were not peer reviewed and not in English: 46 additional items remained
↓	↓
Removed publications that did not significantly discuss “Indigenous journalism”: 29 items remained	Removed publications that did not significantly discuss “Indigenous journalism”: 18 additional items remained
↓	↓
<b>Result: 47 items considered for further analysis</b>	

*Comments:* Search conducted according to the same protocol in two iterations. The second iteration took account of the increasing number of studies referring to this topic.

We initially searched for the term “Indigenous journalism” in Google Scholar on 3 October 2017 and found 137 search results. Once we removed duplicates, we had 125 items. Between October and December 2017, we cross-referenced our search results with searches for the same term in the Web of Science, Nordicom, and Sociological Abstracts databases. No new items were found.

We excluded all unpublished theses and publications that were not peer reviewed, not research-based, and not in the English language. We then analysed the remaining 55 items to determine whether they were relevant for our study. We reviewed the title and abstract of each item, and those that did not include a discussion of “Indigenous journalism” were discarded. We also excluded articles that referred primarily to Indigenous media (rather than Indigenous journalism or news media), environmental issues, minority languages, or politics. Following this stage, 29 items were retained for review.

We divided these 29 items between our three co-authors, who each conducted a close reading of one-third of the sample and developed analytical memos. At a meeting in Alta, Norway (25–26 January 2018), we discussed the material and our memos and developed a series of analytical categories with which to further analyse the entire sample. From that point, we met at regular intervals to refine our categories and discuss our developing analysis.

By the time our analysis was finalised for submission, our original search was somewhat outdated. We therefore decided to re-run our protocol to ensure that we had not excluded newer publications. On 17 November 2020, we found 96 additional results; removing duplicates left 92 items for review. Following our protocol, we again checked the results against the Web of Science, Nordicom, and Sociological Abstracts databases and did not find any new results. We then categorised our newer findings according to publication type.

We again excluded all unpublished theses and publications that were not peer reviewed, not research-based, and not in the English language. We then analysed the remaining 46 articles to determine whether they were relevant to the topic of our study. Following our original protocol, we reviewed the title and abstract of each item and discarded items that did not include a discussion of “Indigenous journalism”; 18 additional articles were retained for review. Our material therefore consisted of a total of 47 articles. All articles were reviewed according to the analytical categories we had previously developed. The analysis presented in this article is therefore a result of the synthesis of both iterations of our search protocol.

Table 1 provides a breakdown of our search results by publication category according to both iterations of our search.

**Table 1** Search results by publication category

Publication Category	2017	2020	Cumulative
Research articles	59	51	110
Books	32	10	42
Book chapters	7	4	11
Book review	1	1	2
Conference papers	5	5	10
Theses	4	8	12
Encyclopaedia entries	0	3	3
Research indices	8	0	8
Citations	3	0	3
Websites	3	3	6
Newspaper or non-research-based periodical articles	0	3	3
Reports	3	4	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>217</b>

*Comments:* Numbers reflect total items after removal of duplicates in each category.

### *Limitations*

Our search protocol has a number of important limitations. First, we focused on the collective concept of “Indigenous journalism” in order to review the increasing body of research referring to this concept. We therefore did not search for research investigating related practices referring to specific Indigenous people, such as Anishinaabe or Cherokee, or other collective concepts such as First Nations or Aboriginal. Further research would be required to compare the outcomes of our study with this related research. Second, our search focused on material in English. Research published in Spanish, Taiwanese, and other languages are therefore not included in our sample, as our team of researchers would not have been able to access or analyse this. Our search protocol can, however, be replicated to investigate research in other languages and to compare the findings of such investigations with the present study.

### *Epistemology*

Indigenous research requires reflexive engagement with how the relative power of researchers influence representations of Indigenous people and knowledge (see Bull, 2002). Research influences the construction of knowledge in ways that have real consequences for the lives of Indigenous people – in particular, with regard to their representation in the public sphere (Olsen, 2018; Smith, 1999). As a team of three researchers, two of us represent members of and close relations to Indigenous, and one to minority, communities. We consider our diverse backgrounds and experiences a strength, because they have ensured that we have taken a sensitive and reflexive approach which has underpinned the analytical focus of our collaboration. As Olsen (2018) argues, neither privilege/oppression, Indigenous/non-Indigenous, nor insider/outsider refer to binary relations, but to potential positions on relative scales. As a team of three co-authors, we reflected both individually and together on the multiplicity of positions we had with regards to our own and each other's backgrounds, and the potential consequences for how we approached our analysis.

### **Material**

Our material (see Appendices 1 & 2 for overviews) includes 47 studies about Indigenous journalism in Australia and Oceania ( $n = 19$ ), Africa ( $n = 13$ ), North America ( $n = 5$ ), South America ( $n = 2$ ), Asia ( $n = 2$ ), and Northern Europe ( $n = 3$ ); the remaining articles have a global focus ( $n = 3$ ). 35 articles focus on journalism and news media, and the remaining 12 focus on Indigenous media, including a specific discussion of Indigenous journalism. Only nine studies were published before 2010.

A range of methodological approaches were applied. Twelve articles are based on interviews with journalists ( $n = 7$ ); media producers ( $n = 2$ ); and educators and students ( $n = 1$ ). Two focus group studies involve community and audience members. Three additional mixed methods studies rely on interviews along with observation and survey (Adeduntan, 2018); observation and archival research (M'Balla-Ndi, 2017); and analysis of primary documents (Plaut, 2017).

Eight studies use content analysis: five to review journalistic content, one teaching programmes, one a radio programme, and one a participatory media platform. Three additional mixed methods studies rely on content analysis along with historical analysis (Hanusch, 2014b), survey methods (Nwagbara, 2013), and production analysis (Su, 2019).

Furthermore, nine case studies focus on different aspects of the production of Indigenous journalism. Examples include the development of an app to support representation, the co-creation of stories with communities, and two journalism teaching programmes.

The remaining ten studies are predominantly theoretical and explore the evolution of Indigenous journalism as this relates to African journalism (Berger, 2000; Shaw, 2009; Skjerdal, 2011; Tomaselli, 2003); Australian journalism (Hess & Waller, 2015; McCallum & Posetti, 2008; Waller, 2010); as well as global Indigenous journalism (Hanusch, 2013).

We also consider it important to note that in spite of ongoing calls for reflexive approaches to Indigenous research and methodologies, only eight of the contributions in our sample explicitly addressed the relationship of the researcher to the Indigenous community studied.



## **Towards new opportunities for production and participation?**

In this section we summarise and discuss our findings. We 1) focus on how media innovations are understood to influence the process of Indigenous journalism, including its production and consumption; 2) indicate whether new technological affordances are considered to influence journalistic norms of clarity, balance, truth, or collaboration; and 3) identify how research about Indigenous journalism analyses the role of media innovations in introducing new opportunities for political participation.

Most of the studies in our sample ( $n = 40$ ) claim that media innovations provide new opportunities for the production and consumption of Indigenous journalism (see Burrows, 2018; Gift et al., 2019; Hanusch, 2013, 2014b; Latimore et al., 2017; Stewart et al., 2010). Three studies investigate journalism in Indigenous languages (Chibuwe & Salawu, 2020; Cohen & McIntyre, 2019; Skogerbø et al., 2019); four explore how legacy media, including both radio and television, can facilitate the distribution of Indigenous journalism (Adeduntan, 2018; Meadows, 2009; Nwagbara, 2013; Waller et al., 2020); and the remaining articles focus on how Indigenous journalism relates to particular cultural values (Hanusch, 2014b, 2015; M'Balla-Ndi, 2017) or the rhetoric of this kind of journalism (Lang, 2015).

### *Indigenous journalism as a process*

Previous research acknowledges that racism and marginalisation have influenced the representation of Indigenous peoples and the participation of these people in the public sphere (Hartley & McKee, 2000). One contributing factor is the historical lack of *access* that Indigenous people have had to produce media content (Alia, 2010). Innovations in media technologies are understood to change this situation (Hanusch, 2013).

A resulting, but problematic, assumption is that the process of Indigenous journalism can address the problems of representation and civic engagement that Indigenous communities experience. Our analysis finds that empirical analyses that prove these assumptions are lacking. Ginsburg (2002, as cited in Hanusch, 2013: 84), for example, argues that media technologies offer “possibilities for ‘talking back’ to and through the categories that have been created to contain Indigenous people”, but documentation supporting these hypotheses are seldom provided.

Indigenous journalism is also understood to support the amplification of Indigenous *voice*, facilitating empowerment and social change (Hanusch, 2013). Within the context of Indigenous media studies, Dreher, Waller, and McCallum (2018) have explored how Indigenous people can gain voice in policy debates and engage in meaningful political participation. Their analysis extends beyond how media might be used to amplify voice, to question what can be heard in contemporary media ecologies and debates. They point to the shifting technological, institutional, and political relationships that influence – and consequently may bear responsibility for – what can be heard (see also Hess & Waller, 2015; Waller, 2010).

Our analysis reveals that interview-based methods and content analyses are the most dominant methodological approaches in this field. However, only three of the interview-based studies include the perspectives of Indigenous community and audience members. Very few studies use cross-sectional survey methods; we therefore know very little about how this kind of journalism is received. Audience research, including cross-sectional

methods, could be used to further investigate the consumption of Indigenous journalism beyond individual case studies and across countries, contexts, and institutions.

One exception is a study by Ross (2017), who finds that Pacific audiences are not likely to be driven by considerations of ethnicity when selecting the forms of journalism they wish to consume. Furthermore, in a study of performative Yoruba-language readings of English-language news, Adeduntan (2018) finds that audiences enjoy these readings more than their consumption of the news. At the same time, the established tradition of news reporting negatively impacts the research participants' perceptions of the legitimacy of these readings.

While the research we have reviewed claims that Indigenous journalism – as facilitated by media innovations – introduces new opportunities for Indigenous people to access media, and therefore to amplify their voice in the public sphere, few empirical studies explore the extent to which this is the case or investigate the processes of journalistic production that might lead to this. Furthermore, only three of the studies in our sample explored the consumption of Indigenous journalism. We therefore know very little about how Indigenous journalism is produced or consumed or how these processes are facilitated in practice by media innovations.

### *New technological affordances*

Indigenous journalism is conceptualised as a reaction to mainstream journalism facilitated by media innovation. At the same time, journalistic norms of accuracy, objectivity, and truth are found to prevail, albeit with some variation. The research we have reviewed explores variation in norms at the level of journalistic production. However, the focus is not on how these variations are influenced by the exploitation of changing technological affordances.

The norm of “objectivity”, for example, is of particular concern. Objectivity in Indigenous journalism is considered to arise from the balancing of professional journalistic conventions with community and organisational responsibilities (Burrows, 2018; Goyanes et al., 2020). Indigenous journalists are considered to have a responsibility to work closely with Indigenous communities and to foster their development (Burrows, 2018). Lefkowich, Dennison, and Klein (2019) further emphasise the importance of co-constructing journalism with local communities. They adopt co-participatory approaches to developing journalism, where they “reimagine” the newsroom *within* the communities they study, rather than being distinct from them.

Connected to this, tribal and social structures are also found to influence the development of Indigenous journalism. Hanusch (2015) finds that respect for elders, cultural protocols, and culturally specific language influence how Māori journalism is practised. In their study of journalism amongst the Cherokee people, Tallent and Dingman (2011: 252) indicate that “although about 65 tribes in the United States have provisions for a free press in their constitutions, many are prohibited from acting on this provision due to tribal politics or other issues”.

A number of items in our material also identify critical attitudes towards Indigenous journalism, including that it is too soft or partial (Burrows, 2018). Chibuwe and Salawu (2020) further find that one of the key reasons journalism students are not taught about Indigenous perspectives is that lecturers have a low regard for this form of journalism

(see also Todorova, 2016). In one extreme example, Indigenous journalism is considered to have played a role in promoting post-election violence in Kenya (Cohen & McIntyre, 2019). At the same time, in her multi-sited ethnographic study in Burma, Brooten (2006) questions the fundamental relevance of objectivity, particularly in the context of conflict journalism.

A similar discussion relates to the extent to which African journalism is grounded in oral discourse, creativity, and human agency: Shaw (2009) argues that this presents a contrast to Western journalism, while at the same time, Skjerdal (2011) finds no major difference between Ethiopian and Western journalism values in his investigation of the implementation of a five-year postdoctoral programme for journalism education in Ethiopia.

Still, other researchers conceptualise Indigenous journalism as having a role in cultural preservation and community organisation (Cohen & McIntyre, 2019; McCallum & Posetti, 2008; Meadows, 2009) or in language revitalisation (Chibuwe & Salawu, 2020; Cohen & McIntyre, 2019; Nwagbara, 2013; Skogerbø et al., 2019). Skogerbø and colleagues (2019), for example, investigate how public service broadcasters in Norway and Sweden see their role with regard to the protection and revitalisation of Sámi languages. They find that a dilemma exists between the aim of language revitalisation and promotion, and the need to produce journalism that is accessible to Sámi audiences.

The analytical focus of the material reviewed is on identifying differences in the function and practice of Indigenous journalism, rather than the extent to which these variations are facilitated by technological innovation. However, technological developments also influence how Indigenous journalism is developed. The design, diffusion, and use of technology is negotiated in sociotechnical networks. These negotiations are not value neutral, and they can – and often do – reproduce structures of inequality. Hess and Waller (2015), for example, point out that community journalism (including Indigenous journalism) increasingly relies on networked infrastructures supplied by global media companies such as Google, Facebook, and Apple. These companies are not neutral players.

Furthermore, while Alia (2010) has stated that telephony is “language neutral”, and Hanusch (2013) maintains that Indigenous journalism supports linguistic revitalisation, the contemporary reality is more complicated. Journalists use mobile phones – however, the interfaces of these phones are not always available in Indigenous languages (Ní Bhroin, 2015a). In fact, the range of languages available is usually linked to the potential size of the market for these languages (see also Lenihan, 2014). Technological affordances therefore usually reflect market interests at the *expense* of Indigenous languages and culture. We therefore find that the role and influence of commercial organisations in developing technologies that facilitate or constrain Indigenous journalism are not sufficiently problematised in the research we have reviewed.

### *Political participation*

Indigenous journalism is also considered to have a role in increasing the participation and visibility of Indigenous communities in the public sphere (Gift et al., 2019; Hanusch, 2014a; Latimore et al., 2017; Tomaselli, 2003; Waller, 2010) and even in supporting self-determination (Plaut, 2014, 2017; Skogerbø et al., 2019). The influences of new technological norms are more closely investigated in research that explores these questions.

Gift and colleagues (2019), for example, find that the Tonga people of Zimbabwe – who have historically been marginalised in the public sphere – have adopted digital media and increased their participation and visibility in the public sphere. The authors argue that this has fostered the expression of new forms of citizenship, participatory culture, and empowerment.

At the same time, participation in new media platforms is also influenced by commercial logics, including the consequences this has for the privacy and autonomy of Indigenous communities. Mann and Daly (2019) find, for example, that processes of data colonisation that existed prior to the development of the Internet are increased and perpetuated in Big Data practices. They argue that the ways in which data are gathered about Indigenous people perpetuate domination and bring about enduring “digital colonialism”.

Related to this – and echoing concerns about Big Data practices, privacy, and access – Latimore, Nolan, Simons, and Khan (2017) propose that in order to understand how power relations influence the development of Indigenous journalism, we must look beyond theories of participation and deliberation and engage in more critical research that focuses on the material and sociotechnical configuration of networked media. They argue that such an analysis enables a reconnection of our understanding of democratic communication with the material relations that structure it. In particular, they suggest that such an approach could support the identification of how the interrelationship between various elements of these assemblages might result in the amplification of particular messages, while certain other aspects remain unheard.

Furthermore, in their analysis of a mainstream Australian radio programme about rural life, Waller and colleagues (2020) find that Indigenous voices and perspectives are rarely included. As a result, they argue that the programme promotes a “rural imaginary” that is driven by “settler common sense”. It thereby reinforces existing power relations that continue to marginalise Indigenous people. Similarly, M’Balla-Ndi’s (2017) analysis of the production of journalism – both among the Indigenous Kanak and the French communities in New Caledonia – does not support claims about social change, but rather reflects on how the production of journalism, including Indigenous journalism, can serve to maintain existing power relations within and between communities. The research in our sample indicates that colonial perspectives and “settler” mentalities prevail and continue to influence participation in the consumption and production of Indigenous journalism in certain contexts (Kilgo & Harlow, 2019; Lang, 2015; M’Balla-Ndi, 2017; Waller et al., 2020).

One key group of factors explored in this material which may facilitate participation in Indigenous journalism are media institutional factors, including national media regulation and funding mechanisms. However, assigning the responsibility for promoting participation in Indigenous journalism to national governments may present a double-edged sword. Governments may have some responsibility for fostering Indigenous journalism, in particular in the context of righting the wrongs of colonisation and assimilation processes (Hanusch, 2014a); empirical studies in our material find, for example, that Māori journalism is supported by government funding (Hanusch, 2014b). Several television production companies and 21 radio stations are entirely funded by the state in New Zealand, and these have had some success in promoting and preserving Māori language and culture.

However, Skogerbø and colleagues (2019) also find that it is ultimately the national broadcasting institutions in Norway and Sweden which facilitate Sámi journalism that make policy decisions about the allocation of resources. As a result, while it is beneficial for the Sámi community and for Sámi journalists to belong to these larger organisations (see also Plaut, 2014, 2017), the situation renders the community dependent on the policies and priorities of these organisations and their initiatives (Alia, 2010; Markelin & Husband, 2013; Skogerbø et al, 2019).

While the degree of social change that Indigenous journalism promises is paradigmatic, particularly with regard to the potential for political participation, most of the studies in our material do not present empirical evidence of significant social change.

## Conclusion

We set out to investigate how media and technological innovations are understood to facilitate Indigenous journalism, in particular with regard to the role of Indigenous journalism in bringing about social change. Based on a literature review, we find that research on this topic conceptualises Indigenous journalism as something that exists in contrast or opposition to Western journalism. This normative and critical starting point arises because of the extent to which many Indigenous communities have been excluded, marginalised, or subject to racist portrayals in mainstream media. Indigenous journalism is therefore understood as an opportunity to “talk back” and address these historical problems, thereby promoting social change. However, as discussed, not all Indigenous people share the experience of colonisation and marginalisation, and as such, the implications of using this collective concept in this field of research are often not sufficiently addressed.

The recent “burgeoning” (Hokowhitu & Devadas, 2013) of Indigenous journalism is furthermore quite often unproblematically attributed to innovations in media and communication technologies, in particular the Internet, mobile technology, and social media. However, we find that the extent to which these innovations are diffused in specific social and economic contexts, and how this in turn influences the process of Indigenous journalism, remains underexplored. We acknowledge that while media innovations present opportunities for self-expression and participatory culture, these opportunities alone will not lead to social change (see also Gift et al., 2019). Forms of engagement that allow Indigenous communities to raise and frame issues of relevance to them, while maintaining professional standards and respecting individual privacy and autonomy, are equally important (see also Plaut, 2014, 2017; Vargas et al., 2020).

Furthermore, research within the field of media innovations points to the fact that legacy media companies are often wary of innovation, because they want to retain control over their share of the market and do not want to change existing power relations. Global media corporations, which function according to commercial mandates, are increasingly providing the infrastructure according to which Indigenous journalism is being produced and consumed. The potential for the amplification of Indigenous voices – which is understood to contribute to empowerment and social change – is thereby increasingly influenced by global commercial actors rather than political institutions. Our analysis also indicates that this situation is not sufficiently problematised or explored in research on Indigenous journalism.

A further significant knowledge gap relates to the fact that community participation and engagement is considered central to Indigenous journalism. At the same time, only three of the studies in our material explore how audiences engage with, perceive, and use this kind of journalism. We therefore know very little about the extent to which the audiences or users of Indigenous journalism experience or appreciate it, or about how it impacts their everyday lives.

Overall, we find significant knowledge gaps in this field of research. We submit that more critical analytical approaches are required to investigate how media innovations might facilitate the potential of Indigenous journalism for social change.

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## Appendix 1

**Table A1** Overview of empirical material

Method	Reference	Focus/Continent
case study	Couldry, N., & Dreher, T. (2007). Globalization and the public sphere: Exploring the space of community media in Sydney. <i>Global Media and Communication</i> , 3(1), 79–100. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/1742766507074360">https://doi.org/10.1177/1742766507074360</a>	Community media/Australia and Oceania
	Hachten, W. A. (1968). The training of African Journalists. <i>Gazette (Leiden, Netherlands)</i> , 14(2), 101–108. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/001654926801400205">https://doi.org/10.1177/001654926801400205</a>	Journalism/Africa
	Jenks, J. (2016). The scramble for African media: The British government, Reuters, and Thomson in the 1960s. <i>American Journalism</i> , 33(1), 2–19. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/08821127.2015.1134972">https://doi.org/10.1080/08821127.2015.1134972</a>	African media
	Latimore, J., Nolan, D., Simons, M., & Khan, E. (2017). Reassembling the Indigenous public sphere. <i>Australasian Journal of Information Systems</i> , 21, 1–15. <a href="https://doi.org/10.3127/ajis.v21i0.1529">https://doi.org/10.3127/ajis.v21i0.1529</a>	Indigenous app/Australia and Oceania
	Lefkovich, M., Dennison, B., & Klein, P. (2019). Empowerment journalism – Commentary for special issue of <i>Journalism Studies</i> . <i>Journalism Studies</i> , 20(12), 1803–1809. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2019.1638294">https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2019.1638294</a>	Empowerment journalism/Global
	Mann, M., & Daly, A. (2019). (Big) data and the north-south: Australia’s informational imperialism and digital colonialism. <i>Television &amp; New Media</i> , 20(4), 379–395. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476418806091">https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476418806091</a>	Digital colonialism/Australia and Oceania
	Martin, J. (2018). Writing Aboriginality: The portrayal of Indigenous people in Australia’s Walkley-Award-winning features. <i>Literary Journalism Studies</i> , 10(1), 8–19. <a href="https://ialjs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Indigenous-LJ-8-69.pdf">https://ialjs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Indigenous-LJ-8-69.pdf</a>	Indigenous journalism/Australia and Oceania
	Skjerdal, T. S. (2011). Teaching journalism or teaching African journalism? Experiences from foreign involvement in a journalism programme in Ethiopia. <i>Global Media Journal African Edition</i> , 5(1). <a href="https://doi.org/10.5789/5-1-56">https://doi.org/10.5789/5-1-56</a>	African journalism
	Tallent, R. J., & Dingman, R. S. (2011). Cherokee independent press act of 2000. <i>Journal of Communication Inquiry</i> , 35(3), 252–274. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/0196859911413468">https://doi.org/10.1177/0196859911413468</a>	Indigenous journalism/North America

<b>interviews</b>	Burrows, E. (2018). Indigenous media producers' perspectives on objectivity, balancing community responsibilities and journalistic obligations. <i>Media, Culture &amp; Society</i> , 40(8), 1117–1134. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443718764807">https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443718764807</a>	Indigenous media/Global
	Chibuwe, A., & Salawu, A. (2020). Training for English language or Indigenous language media journalism: A decolonial critique of Zimbabwean journalism and media training institutions' training practices. <i>Journal of African Media Studies</i> , 12(2), 137–156. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1386/jams_00016_1">https://doi.org/10.1386/jams_00016_1</a>	Indigenous journalism/ Africa
	Cohen, M. S., & McIntyre, K. (2019). Local-language radio stations in Kenya: Helpful or harmful? <i>African Journalism Studies</i> , 40(3), 73–88. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/023743670.2020.1729830">https://doi.org/10.1080/023743670.2020.1729830</a>	African journalism
	Goyanes, M., López-López, P. C., & Demeter, M. (2020). Social media in Ecuador: Impact on journalism practice and citizens' understanding of public politics. <i>Journalism Practice</i> , 15(3), 366–382. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2020.1724180">https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2020.1724180</a>	Indigenous journalism/ South America
	Hanusch, F. (2015). Cultural forces in journalism: The impact of cultural values on Māori journalists' professional views. <i>Journalism Studies</i> , 16(2), 191–206. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2013.859864">https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2013.859864</a>	Indigenous journalism/ Australia and Oceania
	Hanusch, F. (2014b). Dimensions of Indigenous journalism culture: Exploring Māori news-making in Aotearoa New Zealand. <i>Journalism: Theory, Practice &amp; Criticism</i> , 15(8), 951–967. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884913495757">https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884913495757</a>	Indigenous journalism/ Australia and Oceania
	Hanusch, F., & Uppal, C. (2015). Combining detached watchdog journalism with development ideals: An exploration of Fijian journalism culture. <i>International Communication Gazette</i> , 77(6), 557–576. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048515597873">https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048515597873</a>	Indigenous journalism/ Australia and Oceania
	Plaut, S. (2014). Nation-building, not “resistance radio”. <i>Nordicom Review</i> , 35(1), 81–97. <a href="https://doi.org/10.2478/nor-2014-0006">https://doi.org/10.2478/nor-2014-0006</a>	Indigenous journalism/ Europe
Ross, T. (2017). Rethinking journalism and culture: An examination of how Pacific audiences evaluate ethnic media. <i>Journalism Studies</i> , 18(12), 1559–1575. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2016.1146626">https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2016.1146626</a>	Pacific journalism/Australia and Oceania	
<b>comparative interviews</b>	Skogerbø, E., Josefsen, E., & Fjellström, A.-M. (2019). Indigenous political journalism in the Norwegian and Swedish public service broadcasters. <i>Journalism Studies</i> , 20(7), 991–1008. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2018.1477550">https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2018.1477550</a>	Indigenous journalism/ Europe
<b>focus groups</b>	Meadows, M. (2009). Electronic dreaming tracks: Indigenous community broadcasting in Australia. <i>Development in Practice</i> , 19(4–5), 514–524. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/09614520902866363">https://doi.org/10.1080/09614520902866363</a>	Indigenous community broadcasting/ Australia and Oceania
	Ross, T. (2019). Pulled two ways: Norms of ‘Pacificness’ and journalism in New Zealand’s Pacific news media. <i>Journal of Intercultural Studies</i> , 40(6), 649–664. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2019.1675616">https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2019.1675616</a>	News media/ Australia and Oceania

<b>observation/ interview/ survey</b>	Adeduntan, A. (2018). Truth, nothing but the performative truth. <i>Journalism Studies</i> , 19(12), 1712–1729. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2017.1299587">https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2017.1299587</a>	Indigenous journalism/ Africa
<b>archival/ participant observation/ interviews</b>	M'Balla-Ndi, M. (2017). Division in the land of 'the unspoken': Examining journalistic practice in contemporary New Caledonia. <i>MedieKultur: Journal of media and communication research</i> , 33(62), 52–71. <a href="https://doi.org/10.7146/mediekultur.v33i62.24431">https://doi.org/10.7146/mediekultur.v33i62.24431</a> .	Indigenous journalism/ North America
<b>interviews/ primary source documents</b>	Plaut, S. (2017). Reshaping the borders of journalism: Lessons learned from transnational peoples' journalism. <i>Journalism Practice</i> , 11(1), 1–32. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2015.1092391">https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2015.1092391</a>	Indigenous journalism/ Europe
<b>observation</b>	Stewart, H., Meadows, M., Bowman, L., van Vuuren, K., & Mulligan, P. (2010). Indigenous voice: A work-integrated learning case study in journalism education. <i>Australian Journalism Review</i> , 32(2), 59–72.	Indigenous journalism/ Australia and Oceania
<b>multi-sited ethnography</b>	Brooten, L. (2006). Political violence and journalism in a multiethnic state: A case study of Burma (Myanmar). <i>Journal of Communication Inquiry</i> , 30(4), 354–373. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/0196859906290841">https://doi.org/10.1177/0196859906290841</a>	Political journalism/Asia
<b>content analysis</b>	Calvi, P. (2018). Reporting on Indigenous issues: The extractive matrix of journalism vis-à-vis native Latin Americans. <i>Literary Journalism Studies</i> , 10(1), 46–69.	Indigenous journalism/ South America
	Gift, G., Last, A., & Deity, C. N. (2019). The Tonga people of Northern Zimbabwe: An encounter with digital media. <i>African Journalism Studies</i> , 39(4), 91–108. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2018.1533487">https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2018.1533487</a>	Digital media/Africa
	Kilgo, D. K., & Harlow, S. (2019). Protests, media coverage, and a hierarchy of social struggle. <i>The International Journal of Press/Politics</i> , 24(4), 508–530. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161219853517">https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161219853517</a>	US Journalism/North America
	Lang, M. J. (2015). Written out of their own story: The rhetorical colonialism of journalistic practice. <i>Communication Studies</i> , 66(1), 85–102. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/10510974.2013.867408">https://doi.org/10.1080/10510974.2013.867408</a>	Indigenous journalism/ North America
	Todorova, M. S. (2016). Co-created learning: Decolonizing journalism education in Canada. <i>Canadian Journal of Communication</i> , 41(4), 673–692. <a href="https://doi.org/10.22230/cjc.2016v41n4a2970">https://doi.org/10.22230/cjc.2016v41n4a2970</a>	Indigenous journalism/ North America
	Waller, L., Mesikämmen, E., & Burkett, B. (2020). Rural radio and the everyday politics of settlement on Indigenous land. <i>Media, Culture &amp; Society</i> , 42(6), 805–822. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443719876620">https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443719876620</a>	Indigenous journalism/ Australia and Oceania
<b>content and framing analysis</b>	Browne, J., Gleeson, D., Adams, K., Atkinson, P., & Hayes, R. (2018). Coverage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nutrition in major Australian newspapers, 1996–2015. <i>Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health</i> , 42(3), 277–283. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/1753-6405.12790">https://doi.org/10.1111/1753-6405.12790</a>	Indigenous journalism/ Australia and Oceania
	Vargas, C., Browne, J., Hardy, T., Moore, E., Vally, H., & Gleeson, D. (2020). Coverage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nutrition in the Koori Mail. <i>Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health</i> , 44(3), 180–185. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/1753-6405.12980">https://doi.org/10.1111/1753-6405.12980</a>	Indigenous journalism/ Australia and Oceania

<b>historical/ content analysis</b>	Hanusch, F. (2014a). Dimensions of Indigenous journalism culture: Exploring Māori news-making in Aotearoa New Zealand. <i>Journalism: Theory, Practice &amp; Criticism</i> , 15(8), 951–967. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884913495757">https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884913495757</a>	Indigenous journalism/ Australia and Oceania
<b>content analysis/ survey</b>	Nwagbara, G. U. (2013). Indigenous language news and the marginalization of some ethnic groups in the Nigerian broadcast media. <i>Studies of Tribes and Tribals</i> , 11(2), 153–160. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/0972639X.2013.11886677">https://doi.org/10.1080/0972639X.2013.11886677</a>	Indigenous journalism/ Africa
<b>content/ production analysis</b>	Su, C. (2019). An alternative chronicle of natural disaster: Social justice journalism in Taiwan. <i>International Journal of Communication</i> , 13, 3321–3340.	Social justice journalism/ Asia

## Appendix 2

**Table A2** Overview of theoretical material

Reference	Focus/Continent
Berger G. (2002). Theorizing the media—Democracy relationship in Southern Africa. <i>Gazette</i> (Leiden, Netherlands), 64(1), 21–45. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/17480485020640010201">https://doi.org/10.1177/17480485020640010201</a>	Media and democracy/ Africa
Hanusch, F. (2014b). Indigenous cultural values and journalism in the Asia-Pacific region: a brief history of Māori journalism, <i>Asian Journal of Communication</i> , 24(4), 390–403. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2014.885538">https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2014.885538</a>	Indigenous journalism/ Australia and Oceania
Hanusch F. (2013). Charting a theoretical framework for examining Indigenous journalism culture. <i>Media International Australia</i> , 149(1), 82–91. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X1314900110">https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X1314900110</a>	Indigenous journalism/ Australia and Oceania
Hess, K., & Waller, L. (2015). Community journalism in Australia: A media power perspective. <i>Community Journalism</i> , 4(1), 2–9. <a href="https://dro.deakin.edu.au/view/DU:30075759">https://dro.deakin.edu.au/view/DU:30075759</a>	Community journalism/ Australia and Oceania
James, S. L. (1990). Development of Indigenous journalism and broadcast formats: Curricular implications for communication studies in Africa. <i>African Media Review</i> , 4(1), 1–14. <a href="https://n2t.net/ark:/85335/m59p2xh7n">https://n2t.net/ark:/85335/m59p2xh7n</a>	Indigenous journalism / Africa
Nwagbara, G. U. (2013). Indigenous language news and the marginalization of some ethnic groups in the Nigerian broadcast media. <i>Studies of Tribes and Tribals</i> , 11(2), 153–160. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/0972639X.2013.11886677">https://doi.org/10.1080/0972639X.2013.11886677</a>	Indigenous language news/Africa
Reynolds, B. (2018). Indigenous literary journalism, saturation reporting, and the aesthetics of experience. <i>Literary Journalism Studies</i> , 10(1), 37–46.	Indigenous literary journalism/ Global
Shaw I. S. (2009). Towards an African journalism model: A critical historical perspective. <i>International Communication Gazette</i> , 71(6), 491–510. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048509339792">https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048509339792</a>	African journalism/Africa
Skjerdal T. S. (2012). The three alternative journalisms of Africa. <i>International Communication Gazette</i> , 74(7), 636–654. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048512458559">https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048512458559</a>	African journalism/Africa
Waller, L. (2010). Indigenous research ethics: New modes of information gathering and storytelling in journalism. <i>Australian Journalism Review</i> , 32(2), 19–31.	Indigenous journalism/ Australia and Oceania