



Freedom of Expression Revisited: Citizenship and Journalism in the Digital Era. Edited by Ulla Carlsson. Göteborg: Nordicom, 2013. 171 pp. ISBN 9789186523749.

Freedom of Expression Revisited: Citizenship and Journalism in the Digital Era is a welcome follow up to Nordicom's 2009 collection of essays, *Freedom of Speech Abridged: Cultural, Legal and Philosophical Challenges*. True to its title, this collection of essays revisits the subject of freedom from a variety of philosophical, legal, ethical, and journalistic standpoints. Edited by Ulla Carlsson, Director of Nordicom at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, this collection is the result of the International Freedom of Expression Days conference held in Finland in December 2012.

The book addresses traditional concerns about free speech, freedom of information, and the freedom of the press, but its unique appeal comes from its Nordic perspective. With a particular focus on the Nordic region—Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden (it should also be noted that the essays are divided into two categories: “Views from a Nordic Horizon” and “Views from Global and European Horizons”)—researchers consider the ongoing digitization of media as transformative of questions of democratic rule and the integrity of journalistic practice. These essays lend an important Nordic perspective to conversations on the future of media by reminding readers that issues like the professionalization of journalism, the role of UNESCO in media regulation, and the question of tolerance in the aftermath of the Mohammed cartoon controversy are truly global issues.

What makes this collection unique is that while their concerns are complimentary (and tend to emphasize freedom of expression and freedom of information as a human right), their individual concerns vary in scope. For instance, Helge Rønning's essay “Freedom of Expression is Not a Given Right” makes it clear that freedom of speech is not a guarantee even though the right to freedom of expression is part of what allows a pluralistic democracy to thrive. For Rønning, the question remains (and again many of the researchers are conflicted about this subject) where we draw the line between responsible behaviour (ethical citizenship) and prescriptive legal codes, which dictate acceptable forms of speech, thus censoring utterances that conflict or challenge the status quo. Risto Kunelius addresses these same concerns under a different framework, calling the complexity of these questions nothing more than “a dizzy Satanic pendulum between imaginaries and realities” (Carlsson, 2013, p. 41).

In perhaps the most concrete examination of the free speech debate, Elizabeth Eide's article, “Norway and July 22: A Clash of Diagnoses ...?” examines social media responses in the aftermath of the recent Norway attacks of Anders Behring Breivik. It is here that the question of tolerance is put front and centre. Again, while Eide agrees with the overlap between ethical and legal realms (especially given the international reach of national media outlets), she is careful to add that free speech is part of the experience that comes with living in common with others. Nonetheless, she concludes,

“If out living in transnationality implies that conflicts between different ideas about free expression, and for example blasphemy, are becoming more intensified, so will the urge to stand by the fundamental rights of democracies. Only incitement to violence and outright racism may be stopped by the law” (p. 89).

From a Canadian context, we often forget what Kaarle Nordensteng reminds us of in his essay “Deconstructing Libertarian Myths About Press Freedom” that Nordic countries “enjoy top positions in the international rankings of press freedom” (p. 45). What some call the “the Nordic model” is, as Carlsson highlights in her introduction, its reputation for strong democracies, media transparency, and a general absence of corruption. Nonetheless, a motivating factor for many of these essays is the weakening of the Nordic model as a result of blatant deregulation, professionalization, and an all-consuming interest in entertainment over and above investigative journalism. For Carlsson there is no doubt: “critical, independent journalism is now an endangered species” (p. 9).

It is on this point that the most impassioned article in the volume comes to light, William Horsley’s “Towards a Better World: What the North Can Do—Safety and an Enabling Environment for Journalists.” For Horsley, Carlsson’s idea of journalism as an endangered species has less to do with the actual craft and more to do with the safety of journalists. Horsley reminds us that both “censorship and self-censorship work, often through fear and through unseen pressures” (p. 146). If we want to protect free speech, we must not forget to protect those individuals who expose corruption for the sake of democracies around the world. Responding to Joanne Lisosky and Jennifer Henrichsen’s recent book, *War on Words: Who Should Protect Journalists?* Horsley argues that the solution requires both national and international monitoring. In addition to good training, support, and safety equipment, we also need “the establishment of functioning systems of national law, backed up by credible international mechanisms to bring about compliance” (p. 150), when matters of press freedom are jeopardized.

For those looking for scholarship on free speech in the Internet era, Rikke Frank Jørgensen’s essay “Freedom of Expression in the Internet Era” traces a recent discussion by the UN Human Rights Council on what is to be done on issues ranging from human rights, inequality, global development, and universal access to the Internet. Her work reminds us that legislators must consider how companies like Google complicate privacy laws, asking: “Should Google as an important enabler of information search in the public domain, have an extra obligation to respect human rights standards?” (p. 126). Jørgensen, while acknowledging that the “Internet is increasingly recognized as an important enabler for freedom of expression” (p. 126), also makes it clear that the inequality of access on the world stage and the private/public concern over information gatekeepers remain a challenge for the years ahead.

Overall, each essay in this volume examines the complexities that surround the issue of free expression in today’s information-driven digital age. The strength of this collection is its Nordic perspective and the diversity of viewpoints brought to the stage. Many scholars interested in subjects ranging from European media history to human rights issues, multiculturalism to UNESCO will find these essays reflective and engag-

ing. *Freedom of Expression Revisited: Citizenship and Journalism in the Digital Era* is a welcome contribution to the discussion on how the ethical and legal difficulties of censorship can remain relevant in today's global media landscape.

References

- Lisosky, Joanne, & Henrichsen, Jennifer. (2011). *War on words: Who should protect journalists?* Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.
- Rønning, Helge, & Anine Kierulf (Eds). (2009). *Freedom of speech abridged: Cultural, legal and philosophical challenges*. Göteborg: Nordicom.

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