

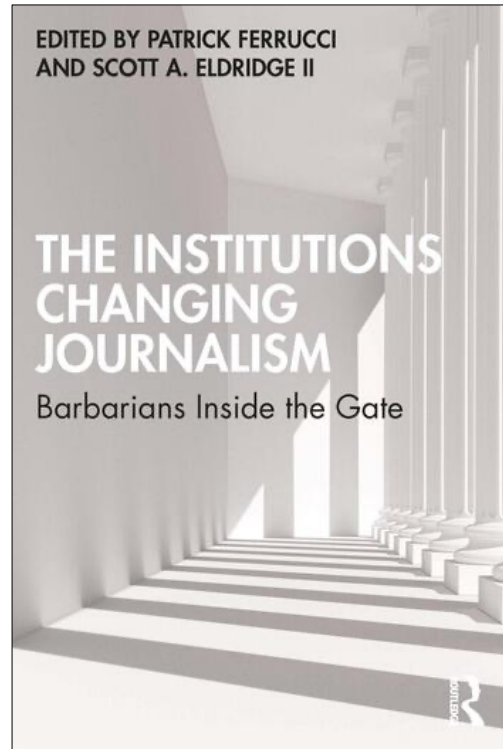
Patrick Ferrucci and Scott A. Eldridge II (Eds.), **The Institutions Changing Journalism: Barbarians Inside the Gate**, New York, NY: Routledge, 2022, 218 pp., \$48.95 (paperback).

Reviewed by
Thomas R. Schmidt
University of California, San Diego

It is somewhat curious that research on digital journalism naturally focuses on change while the actual nature of change remains undertheorized. On the one hand, there is a natural affinity to think about digital journalism as transformation, the “changing of one state into another, the altering set of norms, and the introduction of new routines” (Robinson, Lewis, & Carlson, 2019, p. 371). On the other hand, the hybrid reality of journalism (Witschge, Anderson, Domingo, & Hermida, 2019) makes it hard to pin down what exactly is changing without falling into the simplistic pattern of asking “how X is changing and what this means for journalism” (Peters & Carlson, 2019). As a result, journalism studies as a discipline tends to pay too much attention to the effects of technological change, paying less attention to the processes producing them (Zelizer, 2019).

Against this backdrop the edited volume **The Institutions Changing Journalism: Barbarians Inside the Gate** offers a fresh—and process-focused—perspective. Edited by Patrick Ferrucci (University of Colorado–Boulder) and Scott A. Eldridge II (University of Groningen), the collection of essays analyzes journalism as a field that is populated by a range of new actors and as a formation that is shaped by a multiplicity of forces. Each of the eleven core chapters foregrounds how a particular sociotechnical constellation influences the production, circulation, and reception of news. The editors apply to them the label “institutions” and their spectrum ranges from established entities like the law and advertising to nonprofit foundations and Web analytics. At the heart of this book lie deceptively simple questions: How do we think about change in journalism? Who and what influences how journalism is done? Of course, journalism has always been viewed as a collective endeavor embedded in and interacting with other social institutions. But the digital turn has given more urgency to the questions of what remains of journalism—as a practice, a profession, an aspiration—if everything changes.

In the introductory chapter, Eldridge reflects on what we mean by journalism and how as an institution it is affected by tradition and change. Instead of viewing journalism as a fixed space, Eldridge advocates for a perspective that zeroes in on the conceptual and material interactions “between the familiar and the new, between tradition and alternatives, and between exogenous and endogenous forces within and without the journalistic field” (p. 9) shaping what used to be but no longer is the demarcated field of journalism. In this context the institutional lens serves less like a theoretical concept and more like a



heuristic tool. Throughout the book, it helps establish a common core among disparate elements. "Institution" here refers to external forces that shape journalism in structured relationships.

Some authors focus on key change agents in contemporary journalism (e.g., native advertising, nonprofit foundations, technological platforms). Konieczna, for example, discusses the growing influence of funders and argues that while these revenue streams offer much-needed support for quality journalism, they also come with different pressures. Nelson and Wenzel focus on the role of advocates for engaged journalism, that is, entrepreneurs and organizers who want to strengthen the bonds between journalists and the communities they serve. The authors emphasize how these seemingly external change agents often have experience as professional journalists who then change careers to reform journalism from the outside.

Other chapters provide helpful typologies to break down how we can think about transformations. For instance, Hepp and Loosen introduce a matrix that identifies three intertwined developments modifying reconfigurations in journalism: an expansion of the constellation of actors, a transformation in the character of journalism's organizational figurations, and a change in work practices and processes (p. 130). Another typology can be found in the chapter about Web analytics. Bélair-Gagnon suggests conceptualizing Web analytics as gatekeepers, meaning that they are "both a set of social actors (e.g., Web analytics companies, social media platforms, and social media editors) and technological actants (e.g., algorithms, post meta data, etc.)" (p. 159). The book even contains some internal criticism about its approach. As Baack, Cheruiyot, and Ferrer-Conill write, "the idea that 'barbarians' influence journalism over-simplifies real-world interdependencies and limits our ability to grasp public communication's changing dynamics more broadly" (p. 103). In contrast, these authors suggest not just exploring how journalism is determined by external forces but also examining how journalistic values and practices infiltrate other areas of public communication (e.g., when journalistic discourses of freedom of information or data literacy are co-opted by civic technology organizations).

Surprisingly, the book does not fully engage with the conceptual tenets of institutionalism. This theoretical approach goes back decades but developed a particular following in political science and sociology. While initial adaptations of institutionalism to journalism were interested in examining how and to what extent journalism is connected to and constrained by other institutions in society (i.e., government, law, the marketplace, etc.), newer iterations attempt to conceptualize institutions as complex social structures. For example, according to a new definition by Steven Reese (2021), institutions are "formed by an interlocking network of rules and activities, roles, technologies, norms, and collective frames of meaning—which work together to sustain its coherence, endurance, and value" (p. 257). In this context the editors would have heightened the impact of the book if the content had engaged more vigorously with the theory and conceptualization of institutions. Not all institutions are equal. While some concepts are long established (the law as institution), in other areas it seems like a stretch to apply the label of "institution" (e.g., audiences).

In the concluding chapter, Ferrucci reflects on how journalism (and journalism studies) is affected by the new actors and formations that were highlighted throughout the book. "One main point of this book," he writes, "is to identify these interlopers, and then illustrate how journalism's historic autonomy over how these interlopers impact practice is now long gone, a relic from a past continuously romanticized" (p. 181). Taken together the essays in this book demonstrate how the mechanisms of change depend as much on

outsiders as they do on the inner workings of journalists and news organizations. As Ferrucci concludes, "the field of journalism is now more of a constellation of [. . .] normative ideals dispersed based on how much outside institutions have affected it" (p. 190). Some of these normative ideals might be eroding journalism's autonomy and authority, but others are creating opportunities for change and renewal. The book makes a valuable contribution in highlighting how multifaceted the challengers and change agents of journalism have become.

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