Exploring Investigative Journalism

Boundaries, Epistemologies and Visibilities

Fredrik Bjerknes

Thesis for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD)
University of Bergen, Norway
2024

UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN

Exploring Investigative Journalism

Boundaries, Epistemologies and Visibilities

Fredrik Bjerknes

Thesis for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD)
at the University of Bergen

Date of defense: 19.04.2024

Year: 2024

Title: Exploring Investigative Journalism

Name: Fredrik Bjerknes

Print: Skipnes Kommunikasjon / University of Bergen

Scientific Environment

This thesis is the result of a research project that was carried out between 2019 and 2023 at the *Norwegian Center for Investigative Journalism* (SUJO). The project was initiated and fully funded by the Department of Information Science and Media Studies at the University of Bergen (UiB) and developed by me.

Acknowledgments

Writing a doctoral dissertation has been fun and rewarding but also a lot harder than I imagined. Fortunately, I have not been alone with my work. Many people have helped me along the way who deserve recognition. First, I want to thank my supervisors Professor Astrid Gynnild and Professor Øyvind Vågnes for the great support I have received during these years. Thank you for your patience, knowledge, and understanding. Your insightful guidance, and encouragement, along with the absolute freedom you both have given me to pursue my own developing research interests, have been invaluable to me. Further, I would like to thank my friends and colleagues at the *Norwegian Center for Investigative Journalism* (SUJO) for all the emotional support. Thank you also to my academic colleagues from the Infomedia department, especially those belonging to the Journalism Research Group. Thank you also to the gang from the *Nordic Media Days* for all the insightful discussions and social activities. I am also grateful to *The New York Times* and *Verdens Gang* for allowing me to reproduce a selection of screenshots from their impressive work. Finally, I would like to thank my wife Gunnhild, and my son Birger, who have provided me with fun distractions, great love, and unconditional support all these years, always reminding me of what's really important in life.

Bergen, November 2023

Abstract

This thesis explores the visuality and epistemology of investigative journalism by analysing how investigative reporters justify their knowledge claims and make a case for their epistemic authority. Adopting a sociological approach to the study of epistemology, the thesis attempts to tackle the overarching twofold research question: *How is investigative journalism distinguishable from other forms of journalism, and how is visual evidence used to make knowledge claims in investigative journalism?* The thesis consists of a framing introduction and three empirical articles. The articles deploy three approaches to qualitative textual analysis to study investigative journalism's discursive boundaries and epistemic practices. The articles analyse (1) how journalists compete to develop innovative methods, (2) how collected user-generated photographs and videos are mobilised as evidence in digital investigative journalism, and (3) how professional photographs are used to signal authority and veil uncertainty in investigative crime journalism. Drawing on theoretical insights from the sociology of knowledge, science and technology studies, and visual culture studies, the thesis suggests that investigative journalism can be understood as a distinctive yet malleable form of journalistic knowledge production with porous boundaries, expanding epistemologies, and multiple visibilities. By uncovering moral and legal transgressions and holding the powerful to account on behalf of the general public, investigative journalism functions as the ultimate marker of journalistic authority that legitimises and upholds journalism as an important and reliable knowledge-producing field in society. Empirically, the thesis demonstrates that the visuality and epistemology of investigative journalism are constantly being reconfigured and renegotiated in its material output and in the metajournalistic discourse surrounding this output. The thesis thus concludes on a provoking note, arguing that there is no such thing as pure investigative journalism. Rather, it is more accurate and productive to talk about degrees of investigative attributes in news texts, epistemic practices, and visualities. The thesis contributes to the international research literature on investigative journalism, the epistemologies of journalism, and visual journalism.

Sammendrag

Denne avhandlingen utforsker ulike former for visuelle utrykk og institusjonaliserte epistemiske praksiser i undersøkende journalistikk gjennom å studere hvordan undersøkende journalister sannsynliggjør sine påstander og argumenterer for sin epistemiske autoritet. Avhandlingen inntar en sosiologisk tilnærming til studiet av journalistisk kunnskapsproduksjon og forsøker å besvare det overordnede todelte forskningsspørsmålet: *Hva skiller undersøkende journalistikk fra andre typer journalistikk, og hvordan brukes det visuelle som bevis for å fremsette påstander i undersøkende journalistikk?* Avhandlingen består av en innledning og tre forskningsartikler. Artiklene tar i bruk tre ulike typer kvalitativ tekstanalyse i tre forskjellige empiriske kontekster. Artiklene analyserer (1) hvordan undersøkende journalister konkurrerer om å utvikle innovative metoder, (2) hvordan innsamlede brukergenererte fotografier og videoer mobiliseres som bevis i digital undersøkende journalistikk, og (3) hvordan profesjonelle fotografier brukes til å signalisere autoritet og tilsløre usikkerhet i undersøkende kriminaljournalistikk. Med utgangspunkt i et teoretisk rammeverk som kombinerer perspektiver fra kunnskapssosiologi, vitenskapsstudier og visuell kulturstudier, foreslår avhandlingen at undersøkende journalistikk kan forstås som en særegen og tilpasningsdyktig form for journalistisk kunnskapsproduksjon. Ved å opptre som en vaktbikkje på vegne av samfunnet som avslører og påpeker moralske og lovmessige overskridelser, fungerer undersøkende journalistikk som den ultimate journalistiske autoritetsmarkøren og en legitimering av journalistikk som et viktig kunnskapsproduserende felt. Et empirisk hovedfunn i artiklene er at visualiteten og epistemologien til undersøkende journalistikk reforhandles og endres kontinuerlig gjennom ulike former for materiell produksjon og i den metajournalistiske diskursen som omslutter denne produksjonen. Avhandlingen konkluderer derfor med en provoserende påstand om at det ikke finnes noe slikt som ren undersøkende journalistikk. Det er mer presist og produktivt å snakke om grader av undersøkende attributter i nyhetstekster, epistemiske praksiser og visuelle uttrykk. Oppsummert bidrar avhandlingen til den internasjonale forskningslitteraturen på undersøkende journalistikk, journalistiske epistemologier og visuell journalistikk.

Preface

The following thesis is article-based and divided into two main parts. The first part is the framing introduction, or *kappe* in Norwegian, which aims to introduce and interconnect the three articles and position the research project as a whole within extant literature. The second part comprises the three solo-authored articles that form the empirical foundation of the thesis. Two of the articles have already been published and the last one was recently submitted to an international academic journal.

List of Publications

Bjerknes, Fredrik (2022) Inventive Factfinders: Investigative Journalism as Professional Self-representation, Marker of Identity and Boundary Work, Journalism Practice, 16:6, 1037-1056, DOI: 10.1080/17512786.2020.1845780

Submitted 03 June 2020 and published online 16 November 2020

Bjerknes, Fredrik (2022) Images of Transgressions: Visuals as Reconstructed Evidence in Digital Investigative Journalism, Journalism Studies, 23:8, 951-973, DOI: 10.1080/1461670X.2022.2061574

Submitted 30 June 2021 and published online 08 April 2022

Bjerknes, Fredrik (2023) Visualising a Murder Mystery: Shifting Visibilities and Epistemic Uncertainty in Investigative Crime Journalism

Submitted November 2023

Table of Contents

Part I: Framing Introduction

1. Introduction

What is investigative journalism? This seemingly simple question has occupied me for more than four years and forms the very fulcrum of this thesis. Among many journalists and journalism scholars, investigative journalism is often characterised as the embodiment of the Fourth Estate and the most rigorous and evidence-based form of journalism. It is argued that this combination makes investigative reporting the very essence of the journalistic enterprise and thus essential to journalism's legitimacy and authority in society as a relevant and trustworthy knowledge-producing field (Ettema & Glasser, 1998; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2021; Protess et al., 1991; Schudson, 2008). However, others have noted that investigative journalism is an elitist term that implicitly downgrades other forms of reporting, of which all are to a certain extent inherently investigative (Aucoin, 2005; Bromley, 2005; Nord, 2007). Nevertheless, the prevailing normative notions among stakeholders seem to be that investigative reporting functions as a bulwark of democracy and that investigative journalists are somehow better and more skilled than their colleagues. These ideas are also occasionally echoed in scholarship on investigative journalism, which according to Michael Bromley (2008) has historically taken a somewhat subservient and internalist approach to its scientific object, which means that scholars rarely have questioned the definitions and demarcations of practitioners or examined their work critically.

This thesis aims to break away from the reverence surrounding investigative journalism by critically exploring its boundaries, epistemologies, and visibilities. The backdrop of this contribution, which takes the form of a combined theoretical exploration and qualitative textual examination, is significantly different from that of the 1980s and 1990s, which saw James Ettema & Theodor Glasser (1985, 1988, 1989, 1998) conducting some of the most formative research on investigative journalism. Obviously, much has happened in the media industry since then. Fuelled by emerging technologies and digitalisation, investigative journalism today is more collaborative, visual, and data-driven than it was in the pre-Internet era (Carson & Farhall, 2018). Advancements in computing, the rise of social media and the emergence of new sensing devices such as smartphones, commercial satellites, and a higher saturation of surveillance cameras have together caused a flood of visual evidence and available data in open-source spaces (Müller & Wiik, 2021). This networked media environment of different participants and platforms has led to significant changes in the ontology of journalism and given rise to a new arsenal of evidentiary objects that are affecting institutionalised procedures of both fact-finding (research) and truth-telling (presentation) in investigative journalism (De Burgh & Lashmar, 2021; Hahn & Stalph, 2018). In other words, new socio-digital technological systems have not only expanded *what* investigative reporters can know but also *how* they can know what they know, and consequently *how* they can make knowledge claims and argue for their epistemic authority. Still, it would be a misconception to conclude that technology has upended the very essence of investigative journalism. As Barbie Zelizer (2019) notes, focusing exclusively on technological novelty and change has three inherent fallacies: "(…) it obscures the fact that technology is always incrementally changing journalism; it blinds us to the detrimental effects of technological change; and it fosters forgetting of what stays stable in journalism across changing technological modalities" (p. 344). Therefore, with an eye on the past, but mostly focusing on the present, this thesis attempts to understand the epistemological amalgamation between emerging and established ways of knowing in investigative journalism by wrestling with the overarching twofold research question:

How is investigative journalism distinguishable from other forms of journalism, and how is visual evidence used to make knowledge claims in investigative journalism?

To answer this question, three empirical studies are conducted using three different types of qualitative textual analysis on three different types of source material: journalistic self-reports, video investigations, and online news articles. The first study examines how Norwegian investigative reporters compete to develop new innovative methods within the national *Norwegian Investigative Journalism Award* (SKUP). The second study unpacks how *The New York Times* (NYT) mobilises collected user-generated images and videos as demonstrative evidence to claim epistemic authority over contested events. The third and last study looks at how the Norwegian newspaper *Verdens Gang* (VG) uses visuals to signal authority and mitigate uncertainty in their three-year-long coverage of one of Norway's most infamous unsolved crimes.

The overarching object of analysis in all three articles is the visuality and epistemology of investigative journalism, which in the context of the thesis is deemed inseparable and defined in the following ways: Drawing on theoretical perspectives from visual culture studies, the thesis understands visuality as "the ways that vision is shaped through social context and interaction" (Sturken & Cartwright, 2017, p. 22), meaning that "how we see, how we are able, allowed, or made to see, and how we see this seeing or the unseen therein" (Foster, 1988, p. ix) is socially produced and affected by technological infrastructures and power relations. The thesis demonstrates empirically that the visuality of investigative journalism takes on many shapes and forms, allowing us to see power abuse and wrongdoings from different perspectives: From the ground level and from the sky; through mobile phones of victims and bystanders and body cameras of transgressors; from satellites and drones; as acts of witnessing, surveillance, and spectacle; and as claims and counterclaims. The thesis argues that the visuality of investigative journalism is characterised by a multiplicity that enables an array of epistemological vantage points from which readers are invited to inspect and take a stand on contested events. Utilising both self-produced photojournalistic images and collected witness media, the visual is mobilised by investigative reporters against oppressors, wrongdoers, and the scopic regimes of rogue actors and states through what the thesis calls "counter-visibilities". The term is an extension of Allan Sekula's original concept of "counter-forensics" (Keenan, 2020; Sekula, 2014), which when transposed to the context of investigative journalism is widened to encapsulate all kinds of image practices that can be used to uncover moral and legal transgressions perpetrated by people in power by challenging, circumventing or inverting the very conditions of visuality (Fuller & Weizman, 2021; Smith & Watson, 2023). However, it is important to note that the "counter-visibilities" of investigative journalism are not articulated in a vacuum but rather situated in wider epistemic currents, discursive fields, and specific journalistic epistemologies. In this thesis, the term epistemology has a particular meaning and refers to the rules, routines, and institutionalised journalistic procedures that operate within a social setting that decides the form of knowledge produced, what counts as evidence in that setting, and how knowledge claims are articulated, implied, and justified (Ekström, 2002, p. 260; Ettema & Glasser, 1985). In line with this thinking, the thesis works from the assumption that investigative journalism is characterised by a different epistemology than other forms of journalism. This epistemology conditions the epistemic work of investigative reporters, including how visuals are captured, collected, weighed, valued, and used as both evidentiary objects and storytelling agents. It is important to note already here in the introduction that this approach to epistemology is pragmatic and sociological and draws primarily on literature from the sociology of knowledge and science and technology studies, not philosophy. This means that the thesis avoids any philosophical discussions of the constitutive properties of true knowledge and rather focuses on analysing how investigative journalists make visual and non-visual knowledge claims that *they* find relationally acceptable in different kinds of material output (Ekström, 2002; Ettema & Glasser, 1985; Parasie, 2015). Thus, with the risk of upsetting epistemologists for not being philosophical enough, sociologists for not being sociological enough, and visual scholars for not being visual enough, the thesis attempts to do sociology *with* the image by examining the visibilities of investigative journalism "not just as representations of the social, but as an aspect and element of social and cultural orders and practices *sui generis"* (Traue et al., 2019, p. 327). To put it as succinctly as possible, the aim is to examine how visuals are *used* in news text as important sources for knowledge construction in the context of investigative journalism while simultaneously interrogating the discursive boundaries and epistemological principles of this very context. Based on a critical reading of the extant literature and insights generated from the three studies, the thesis proposes that the boundaries, epistemologies, and visibilities of investigative journalism are fluid, making it increasingly difficult to draw clear distinctions between investigative journalism, other types of journalism, and other types of knowledge-producing fields such as human rights research, computer science, and detective work. Accordingly, the central argument of the thesis is this: Investigative journalism as a demarcated and purified social practice is a normative construction. It is, therefore, more accurate and productive to speak about degrees of investigative attributes in news texts, epistemic practices, and visualities. This theoretical claim is supported by empirical findings from the three articles, which in different ways probe how investigative journalism is a form of malleable knowledge work that is constantly being reconfigured and renegotiated in its material output and in the metajournalistic discourse that surrounds this output. Paying attention to the explicit and implicit journalistic boundary work carried out both externally and internally in these concerted acts of mediation is vital for understanding how journalism claims and maintains its jurisdictional control as a reliable and trustworthy knowledge-producing field. While investigative journalism is currently a hotbed for innovation and often serves as a spearhead for incorporating new methods and modes of inference into journalism, the thesis finds that it is simultaneously fundamentally true to its principles and traditions, which in the last century have come to signify the very essence of journalism. Consequently, the thesis argues that there is no greater performative marker of journalistic authority than investigative reporting.

1.1 The Structure of the Framing Introduction

This framing introduction consists of six chapters in which I situate the thesis in existing scholarship, sketch its overarching theoretical framework, present the main findings from the three articles, and discuss how they relate to each other and to the overall aim of the research project. This first chapter is the introduction. In chapter two, I provide a background for the thesis by reviewing relevant literature, explaining perspectives, and defining key concepts that have influenced the research process. Chapter three aims to introduce and discuss the theoretical perspectives that unify and connect the three articles by unpacking three central recurring theoretical prisms: boundaries, epistemologies, and visibilities. In chapter four, I present the articles' methods and the thesis' philosophical stance. In chapter five, I summarise the three studies' main findings and discuss how they relate to the overarching research question. In the sixth chapter, I conclude and situate my findings to existing literature. The framing introduction ends with the seventh chapter in which I reflect upon some of the limitations of my research approach and give suggestions for future studies.

1.2 Introduction to the Articles

The idea for this PhD project came during the summer of 2018 when the *Visual Investigations team* at *The New York Times* (NYT) in collaboration with the investigative collective *Bellingcat* and the interdisciplinary research agency *Forensic Architecture* published a groundbreaking visual investigation into an alleged chemical attack perpetrated by the Syrian state on its own people. The investigation introduced a new form of visual truth-telling to a wider audience by combining witness videos, satellite imagery, digital maps, and advanced 3D modelling to reconstruct how a chlorine attack was carried out on a civilian housing complex on the outskirts of Damascus (Browne, Singhvi, et al., 2018).[1] The investigation was astounding not just because of its damning claims that exposed Syria and Russia's repeated lies and denials about the attack (Harkin & Feeney, 2019), but it also raised attention in the media industry because it so effectively demonstrated how new emerging visual technologies were absolutely essential in the making of those claims. More than four years later, several of the epistemic practices and visualisation techniques displayed in the video have been adopted by other news outlets across the globe.[2] *Bellingcat* and *Forensic Architecture* have become household names in the field of investigative journalism and the *Visual Investigations team* at the NYT has established itself as one of the most well-renowned and award-winning investigative units in the world. Naturally, all this has sparked interest among academics. Parallel

[1] I recommend watching the visual investigation before reading on as I will return to it in later chapters. The video can be viewed on the NYT website: https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/06/25/world/middleeast/syria-chemical-attack-douma.html or on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P2X84JZINcI&t=191s

[2] Other media outlets that regularly do visual investigations today are Al Jazeera, the BBC, The Washington Post, The Wallstreet Journal, Sky News, NBC, ABC, the Associated Press, LeMonde, and TV2 Denmark. In the autumn of 2023, Financial Times also announced that it will launch its own visual investigations team.

to this research project, interview studies have been conducted with members of all three organisations (Ganguly, 2022; Müller & Wiik, 2021; Ristovska, 2022), while other scholars have analysed some of their most impactful work (Gates, 2020, 2023; Smith & Watson, 2023). What is more, members of *Forensic Architecture,* which is located at Goldsmiths University of London, have also published theoretical books on visual investigations (Fuller & Weizman, 2021; Schuppli, 2020; Weizman, 2017). This thesis is in dialogue with some of this literature, but it attempts to explore the visuality and epistemology of investigative journalism in a broader sense by looking in the direction of other contexts as well. In addition to conducting an in-depth analysis of 14 video investigations made by *the Visual Investigations team* (article two)[3], the thesis also examines how investigative reporters in Norway compete to develop new methods (article one) and how more traditional visualisation techniques such as the use of self-produced photojournalistic images affect truth-telling in investigative crime journalism (article three). It is important to note that these three solo-authored articles have been written and developed one by one over the course of four years. They are interconnected in the way that the theoretical framework and conceptualisations used in the second and third articles are partly generated by insights from working with the first. One could also say that article three is an indirect response to suggestions for further research in article two. Nevertheless, the most fundamental kinship between the articles is simply that they all, albeit from different contextual viewpoints, examine the discursive boundaries, epistemological principles, and evidentiary objects of investigative journalism in the digital age.

1.2.1 Article One: Inventive Factfinders

When the project began in January 2019, it became immediately clear that defining and conceptualising investigative journalism was no easy task. As a possible way to overcome this problem, I wanted to get a better sense of what practitioners in the field

[3] Originally, I wanted to travel to the USA and do fieldwork with *the Visual Investigations team*. But after meeting the leader Malachy Browne in the fall of 2019, I realised that would be difficult: “We never let any outsiders inside our unit”, was the polite but firm response from Mr. Browne. The difficulty of getting access to the NYT is detailed by Usher (2014) who describes how she had to sign contracts and meet with lawyers to carry out fieldwork at the newspaper. Getting ring-side access to controversial and secretive investigative projects at the newspaper seemed highly unlikely, and I therefore decided not to pursue this further.

considered to be investigative journalism, how technology affected their work, and what they saw as innovative methods. Thus, the first article, *Inventive Factfinders: Investigative Journalism as Professional Self-representation, Marker of Identity and Boundary Work* (Bjerknes, 2022b), explores the boundaries of investigative journalism by examining how Norwegian investigative journalists compete to construct, reiterate, and challenge acceptable epistemic practices. The article conceptualises the annual *Norwegian Investigative Journalism Award* (SKUP) as a metajournalistic site for internal boundary work among journalists (Carlson, 2016; Carlson & Lewis, 2020). By conducting a combination of thematic and narrative analysis of 44 submitted method reports detailing the most high-profile investigations in Norway from the previous year, the article examines both the normative and transformative aspects of the epistemology of investigative journalism. The findings suggest that the investigative method can be conceptualised as a continuum of intertwining epistemic practices whose implementation and combination are context-dependent. Within these different contexts, some investigative attributes and thus identity markers emerge as more contingent than others. In hindsight, the aim of this study was twofold: First, I wanted to empirically demonstrate the muddled boundaries between investigative journalism and other forms of journalism, which I had gleaned from the literature. Second, I wanted to see whether visual evidence or visual storytelling were recurring topics in the competition. In 2018, it was not, but most importantly, the notion that investigative journalism is epistemologically different from other forms of journalism provided me with an analytical entry point that staked out a clear direction for the rest of the research project.

1.2.2 Article Two: Images of Transgressions

The second article, *Images of Transgressions: Visuals as Reconstructed Evidence in Digital Investigative Journalism* (Bjerknes, 2022a), is a deep dive into the work of the *Visual Investigations team*. This article aimed to better understand how visuals are being used as evidence in digital investigative journalism by analysing how the NYT mobilises collected witness media to claim epistemic authority over contested events. The study deploys a modified visual discourse analysis (Keller et al., 2018; Rose, 2023) on 14 video investigations from 2020 to map out how the *Visual*

Investigation team combines different co-existing discursive practices, including narrativisation, coding schemes, highlighting techniques, and different inscription devices to establish what the article calls an “investigative way of seeing”. Drawing on theoretical insights from the sociology of knowledge and science and technology studies (Berger & Luckmann, [1966]1991; Goodwin, 1994; Latour, 1986), the article argues that this investigative vision functions as a performative marker of professional authority that reanimates collected visuals into truth-claims by placing them into evidentiary networks where they are subjugated to on-screen cross-verification. Looking back, the most important takeaway from this study in terms of carving out the next logical step for the research project was the discovery that what initially had seemed to be a paradigmatic shift in the construction of visual evidence in fact turned out to be continuations and remediations of well-established epistemological principles in investigative journalism and discursive strategies for visual truth-building in other knowledge-producing fields.

1.2.3 Article Three: Visualising a Murder Mystery

This made me curious to explore the use of visuals in a more ambiguous empirical context in which the boundaries between independent investigative journalism and more traditional crime reporting that relies heavily on police sources were more blurred. Hence, the third article, *Visualising a Murder Mystery: Shifting Visibilities and Epistemic Uncertainty in Investigative Crime Journalism* (Bjerknes, 2023), examines how professionally produced photojournalistic images are used by the Norwegian newspaper *Verdens Gang* (VG) to make claims and mitigate uncertainty in their coverage of the so-called “Lørenskog-disappearance” – Norway’s most infamous unsolved crime in recent years. By deploying a qualitative longitudinal multimodal content analysis on 310 online news stories published between 2019 and 2021, the study (1) maps out the visual inventory of the case; (2) reconstructs how the victim, the alleged main perpetrator, and the crime scene are represented visually by tracking how their visibilities change in response to shifting epistemic conditions; and (3) analyses how the visual affects the knowledge being produced. The article demonstrates analytically how photographs can go beyond both their evidentiary and illustrative function and serve as infrastructures of inference that can help mitigate verbally articulated uncertainties through what Barbie Zelizer (2010) has coined the "subjunctive voice of the visual". In a case rife with both unverified and contradictory claims, the visual becomes an avenue from which journalists can veil their uncertainty and make the case for their epistemic authority. Thus, this article contributes to the overall aim of the research project by examining a form of visuality in investigative crime journalism that is significantly more suggestive and less demonstrative than the one explored in article two. While the externally sourced image is conceived of as a potential evidentiary object and thus a site for critical scrutiny and analysis in the work of the *Visual Investigations team*, the professionally produced image is used more indirectly as an insinuating storytelling tool in VG's coverage of the "Lørenskog-disappearance". However, this divide in visualisation techniques cannot be explained by merely pointing to differences in news outlets, visual authorship, or topic of coverage; it rather testifies to a multiplicity of visualities that serves different epistemic needs, which in turn points to an empirical reality that complicates and transcends the normative constructions of investigative journalism.

1.3 Thesis Contribution

The articles in this thesis insert themselves into three entangled problem areas in journalism studies where they claim contributions to the extant literature. The first problem area pertains to the scholarship of investigative journalism, which has historically been trapped in a fog of reverence with no scientific consensus on how to define and conceptualise the object it studies. As a way to overcome this problem, the thesis proposes that investigative journalism can be understood as a moving target that is constantly under negotiation with porous boundaries, expanding epistemologies, and multiple visibilities. Relatedly, the second problem area is found in the study of journalistic epistemologies, which up until this point has by and large neglected the visual. By arguing that visual modes of knowing are key to understanding the mediation of journalistic authority, the thesis demonstrates analytically how both externally sourced and professionally produced visuals are used to make knowledge claims in news texts. The third and final contribution is methodological and pertains to a problem area mainly relevant to the study of visual journalism. By introducing two modified approaches to textual analysis, a sociology of knowledge-inspired visual discourse analysis and a multimodal longitudinal content analysis, the thesis attempts to circumvent the problem of "visual essentialism" (Bal, 2003) by staking out two possible paths for the study of the image, both in and across contexts. It should be noted that these contributions do not claim to conclusively resolve these three entangled problem areas. The goal is simply to provide fresh perspectives capable of propelling ongoing scholarly discussions forward, thereby hopefully enriching the scientific understanding of the transformative dynamics happening within investigative journalism.

2. Background

This chapter provides the contextual background of the thesis in which I survey existing literature, unpack perspectives, and define key concepts that have influenced the research approach. The chapter positions the thesis in the nexus between the study of investigative journalism, the epistemologies of journalism, and visual journalism. It should be stressed that the aim of this chapter is not to conduct a systematic review of all literature in these different subfields, nor to identify specific research gaps for each study; that is the task of the articles. The purpose is rather to provide a broad-sweeping inventory in which I highlight important works and discuss how they relate to the scientific understanding of investigative journalism and the overarching research question of the project.[4]

2.1 Journalism as Knowledge Production

In this thesis, journalism is understood as a professional knowledge-producing field tasked with delivering accurate and valuable information to the public (Carlson, 2017; Ekström & Westlund, 2019b). It follows from this that news-making is conceptualised as epistemic work that involves both factfinding (research) and truth-telling (presentation) and that the news itself can be conceived of as containing different *forms* of knowledge (Nielsen, 2017; Park, 1940; Örnebring, 2016).[5] Journalism's legitimacy and authority as a provider of trustworthy knowledge in society are bound up in its institutionalised rules, routines, and procedures, including its ability to bear witness to events (Ekström, 2002; Ettema & Glasser, 1985; Zelizer, 2007). At the heart of journalists' occupational ideology (Deuze, 2005) lies the normative notion that an important part of journalism's self-proclaimed jurisdictional

[4] This chapter focuses mostly on what makes investigative journalism distinguishable from other forms of journalism and less on the role of visual evidence and visual storytelling in investigative journalism. This ratio is inverted in two of the articles.

[5] The thesis adopts a much broader understanding of the term "knowledge" than what is common in the philosophical study of epistemology where knowledge is defined as "a justified true belief". However, this definition has proven untenable (the Gettier-cases), so the debate among philosophers regarding how to define and understand knowledge continues (Audi, 2011; Pritchard, 2018). In the study of journalistic epistemologies, knowledge is usually not strictly defined, since one aim is to investigate "the empirical variety of knowledge in human society" (Ekström & Westlund, 2019b, p. 6).

control (Abbott, 1988) is to act as a Fourth Estate by uncovering transgressions and wrongdoings and holding the powerful to account (Ettema & Glasser, 1998; Protess et al., 1991). However, according to Barbie Zelizer, Pablo J. Boczkowski, and Christopher W. Anderson (2022, pp. 2-5), the normative idea that journalism is an autonomous, disinterested, and value-free institution that can conduct its watchdog role detached from other institutions and the rest of society is an illusion. Crucially, Matt Carlson and Seth Lewis (2020, p. 123) argue that journalism – as a concept, communicative practice, and professional field – is deeply embedded in and conditioned by national, historical, economic, socio-political, epistemological, and technological contexts. Journalism is shaped by these intertwining influences and constantly remade and renegotiated in its material output and by the metajournalistic "talk" that surrounds journalism as a form of epistemic work and cultural practice (Carlson, 2016). Following Carlson and Lewis (2020), the thesis therefore conceptualises journalism as a moving target and an object of ongoing negotiation with socially produced belief systems, fluid boundaries, and evolving epistemic practices. This understanding accentuates journalism's intrinsic duality of endurance and change, thus highlighting its capacity to reinvent itself, when necessary, in continuous processes of hybridisations and reconfigurations that amalgamate the old with the new (Powers, 2012; Vos & Thomas, 2018). This makes settling questions of what journalism *is* an integral and crucial part of the research process but not in terms of arriving at agreed-upon and final definitions. Rather, the aim is to probe the very definitions that inform and regulate journalistic practice, thus moving past questions of what defines journalism as a profession to careful examinations of the various circumstances in which journalists attempt to establish epistemic authority and turn themselves into professional people (Anderson & Schudson, 2020, p. 139). This approach calls for a grounded examination into "the social conditions under which news is legitimated as a form of knowledge" (Carlson, 2022, p. 64) and, more specifically, how certain actors, audiences, and technologies, including visual and non-visual, in these circumstances together influence what the news looks like.

2.2 Scientific Understandings of Investigative Journalism

Conceptualising journalism as a moving target that is constantly subject to social negotiations and transformation gives a more layered and distanced entry point to the study of investigative journalism, which according to Michael Bromley (2005, 2008) has historically been trapped in a fog of reverence: "On the whole, investigative journalism is seen [in scholarship] as a 'good thing', central to the idea of the 'press', and even if flawed in practice, an essential component of flourishing liberal democratic systems" (2008, p. 184).[6] Other scholars have noted that an unintended consequence of this view is that researchers tend to put investigative journalism on a pedestal and take it for granted as a scientific object (Lanosga, 2014; Wuergler et al., 2023). Instead of starting by asking the fundamental question of what investigative journalism is, many studies presuppose its intrinsic properties and societal importance and ask how it operates, how widespread it is, how it is threatened, how it thrives, or how it could be improved (e.g. Gearing, 2021; Knobel, 2018). Insofar as investigative journalism is defined and demarcated as a scientific object, it is often done in a hurry by building upon normative distinctions and definitions provided by prominent stakeholders in the field. To illustrate why this may pose problems, let me give two illustrative examples of stakeholder definitions from the influential book *Investigative Journalism* (De Burgh, 2008) – that is, without suggesting that the book uncritically adopts them as its apparatus of analysis. Asked about definitions, the editor of the *Insight* investigative team at the British newspaper *The Sunday Times*, Jonathon Calvert responds: "Some stories you make five calls on, some twenty. When you are making a hundred, that's investigative journalism (…)". Former *The Guardian* editor and investigative journalist, Alan Rusbridger has a different take: "All journalism is investigative to a greater or lesser extent, but investigative journalism – though it is a bit of a tautology – is that because it requires more, it's where the investigative

[6] "If the "*summum* of the art in the social sciences, is to be capable of engaging very high 'theoretical' stakes by means of very precise and often apparently very mundane, if not derisory, empirical objects – or to adopt Flaubert's motto: to write well about the mediocre" (Bourdieu, 1992, pp. 220-221), then taking on investigative journalism and its intrinsic 'goodness' and immense 'importance' as a scientific object forces upon the researcher a reverse dynamic where the only plausible outcome is to write poorly about the exceptional" (Bjerknes, 2019, p. 2). But alas, here I am.

element is more pronounced" (p. 17). The contradictory normative notions that investigative journalism, in essence, is the *same* as other forms of journalism, yet simultaneously qualitatively different by being quantifiable better and more thorough, is common among journalists and often echoed in research (Gearing, 2021; Protess et al., 1991). The same normative exaltation also pertains to the portrayal of investigative reporters who are referred to in the literature as a "special breed" (Ganguly, 2022), "detectives of democracy" (Hamilton, 2016), "the army of the Fourth Estate" (Walton, 2010), and "custodians of conscience" (Ettema & Glasser, 1998). However, the awe from scholars is perhaps most visible in the catalogue of alternative terms used to name the practice. Terms like "the journalism of outrage" (Protess et al., 1991), "the epitome of journalism" (Ettema & Glasser, 1985), "the Cadillac of journalism" (Greenwald & Bernt, 2000) and a "bulwark of democracy" (Feldstein, 2006) illustrates how this type of journalism is historically perceived in academic circles. I point this out not because I necessarily disagree with these views. I simply wish to highlight that this reverence may pose presuppositions and preunderstandings, or what the French philosopher of science, Gaston Bachelard, ([1938]2002) calls epistemological obstacles.[7] According to Bachelard, the main epistemological obstacle in all scientific inquiry resides in the way the scientific object is already pre-constructed. The pre-constructed vision of investigative journalism is immanent in society and can be observed in news texts, textbooks, podcasts, and particularly in movies (Borins & Herst, 2020). Inspired by Bachelard, Pierre Bourdieu notes that "The force of the pre-constructed resides in the fact that, being inscribed both in things and in minds, it presents itself under the cloak of the self-evident which goes unnoticed because it is by definition taken for granted (1992, p. 251). For Bourdieu, to take a scientific object for granted means to accept the definitions and distinctions of insiders without realising that these may be the very stakes and struggles within the object itself, thus "blurring the boundaries between the object's social dimensions and self-representation and the researcher's analytical

[7] The argument towards the end of this section draws on ideas developed in a course paper I wrote in a Philosophy and Ethics of Science course at the beginning of my PhD (Bjerknes, 2019). The paper was in turn heavily influenced by the first chapter in Hovden (2008).

concepts and epistemological vantage point" (Bjerknes, 2019, p. 4). In the study of investigative journalism, this runs the risk of becoming a double fallacy because the unintended act of exaltation "reproduces and consolidates the established classifications of the journalistic elite, thus helping their continuous domination, an act which is particularly effective because the researcher appears – to everyone, including himself – as a natural outsider" (Hovden, 2008, p. 31). Therefore, to prevent oneself from being dazzled by the pre-constructed object, Bourdieu (1992, pp. 238-239) encourages us to take one step back and carefully retrace the history of the object's emergence.

2.2.1 The Emergence of Investigative Journalism

The genesis of what is today considered investigative journalism precedes the invention and popularisation of the term. This is the main takeaway from the literature that seeks to retrace and historise the cyclical re-emergence of investigative journalism in the United States (Aucoin, 2007; Feldstein, 2006). For obvious reasons, this research is deeply US-centric and has been criticised for paying too much attention to national outlets (Lanosga, 2014). However, its strength lies in its ability to shed light on the matrix of configuring conditions that are necessary for investigative journalism to emerge and thrive. Both James Aucoin (2005) and Mark Feldstein (2006) argue that American journalism has contained investigative elements dating back to the colonial era. However, the actual term 'investigative journalism' emerged gradually and started to gain traction in the industry during the 1960s when the reformative impulse of the early muckrakers was reawakened as part of a broader counterculture movement in the USA. In a time marked by political upheaval, a shift in the mindset of the press coincided with radio and television gaining traction as mass mediums. This gave rise to new dynamics in the media market with more competition on breaking news, which in turn pushed newspapers in a more interpretive and investigative direction (Fink & Schudson, 2014). Initially meant to signal both autonomy from the state and journalistic professionalism, the term investigative journalism reached its popular peak with the Watergate scandal before it paradoxically started to lose its ethos during the late 1970s.[8] According to Aucoin (2005, pp. 114-116), one of the reasons for this was that the term became hijacked by less-serious outlets, which used it to whitewash quasi-investigations and legitimise scandalous hit pieces.[9] As a response to the watering down of both the term and the practice, a group of American journalists founded *Investigative Reporters and Editors* (IRE), a cross-national organisation where 'real' reporters could share tips, methods, and sources.[10] However, to consolidate investigative journalism as a distinct journalistic subdiscipline, it needed to be purified and its boundaries had to be properly demarcated. The organisation's first task became therefore to set down a proper definition. After much-heated debate, they agreed to define an investigative story as "one that does not result from an investigation by law enforcement or other institutions); that is important to readers/viewers; and that reveals information someone or some organization wants to keep secret." According to Aucoin, the definition was controversial at the time, particularly because of its emphasis on exposés of secrets. However, it marked the first time investigative reporters in USA officially articulated a generally agreed-upon definition of their craft (pp. 132-133).[11] The history of IRE is significant for how investigative journalism is understood in this thesis. Aucoin's book illuminates that distinction-making is governed by social interests and that they also happen *internally in* the journalistic field, but more importantly, the founding of IRE also shows that investigative journalism is

[8] Scholars have found that the reporting of *The Washington Post* was an important catalyst but not the decisive factor that made Nixon withdraw from the presidency (Feldstein, 2004, Schudson, 1992). Yet, *All the President's Men* remains a journalistic ur-text that still informs press behavior in western contemporary society (Brennen, 2003).

[9] Interestingly, Carl Bernstein, who together with Bob Woodward came to embody investigative journalism in the 1970s, in a speech rejected the term completely: "I don't particularly buy the idea of so-called investigative reporting as some kind of separate pseudo-science. All good reporting really is based on the same thing, the same kind of work" (Aucoin, 2005, p. 85).

[10] In the following years, IRE came to be both a gatekeeper and catalyst for the further development of investigative journalism in the United States. The organisation also inspired and helped establish similar operations in other parts of the world, including Sweden (FJG) and Norway (SKUP) (Ottesen, 1996, pp. 518-521), and it played a crucial role in the foundation of the Global Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN), which today serves as a hub connecting investigative reporters from around the globe.

[11] Today, IRE defines investigative reporting as "the reporting, through one's own initiative and work product, of matters of importance to readers, viewers, or listeners. In many cases, the subjects of the reporting wish the matters under scrutiny to remain undisclosed" (IRE, 2023).

perceived by journalists as a marker of professional authority that is worth having definitional control over. Historically, this control has also extended into the scientific field.

2.2.2 Defining Investigative Journalism

Currently, there is no scientific consensus on how to define investigative journalism, but scholars tend to agree on four different attributes that together compound the practice. These attributes relate to (1) originality, (2) epistemology, (3) morality, and (4) audience relevance. The emphasis and order of attributes vary and depend on the type of study and theoretical approach. Typically, works that focus on the agenda-building capabilities of investigative journalism tend to put audience relevance first (Protess et al., 1991; Waisbord, 2001), while scholars that focus on news-gathering methods, verification procedures, and storytelling techniques usually emphasise epistemology and morality (Ettema & Glasser, 1998). However, one of the earliest definitions in the literature comes from Levine (1980) who also incorporates ethics and defines investigative journalism as:

> *a search for evidence to justify the publication of a story about an event or a set of events. Ethical and legal considerations, and the journalists' shared cultural need for statements grounded in fact, require that investigative reporters document the details of a story with reliable evidence. (p. 627)*

This understanding is quite similar to more recent definitions such as that by Lanosga (2014), who characterises investigative journalism as “comprehensive, in-depth reporting about public affairs that involve wrongdoing, failure, or social problems brought to light by journalists” (p. 492), and Carson and Farhall (2018), who argue that “an investigative story sets the agenda, is active, has evidence and shows time and research, and verifies information” (p. 1902). A recurring definition that is often referenced in newer literature comes from Stetka and Örnebring (2013), who define investigative journalism as “sustained news coverage of moral and legal transgressions of persons in positions of power that requires more time and resources than regular news reporting” (p. 415). Others opt for more elaborate conceptions. Drawing on stakeholder definitions, both Aucoin (2005) and Cordell (2009, p. 123) argue that for a story to be classified as investigative journalism it must possess the following five characteristics:

> *(1) exposure of information (2) about an important public issue (3) that someone or some organization does not want to be reported (4) that is revealed through the original, time-consuming "digging'" of the reporter (5) for the purpose of inspiring reform". (Aucoin, 2005, p. 91)*

Arguing that such definitions are too restrictive, Kovach and Rosenstiel (2021) suggest a more inclusive and multi-levelled conception that distinguishes between three different subcategories of investigative journalism, namely original, interpretive, and reporting on investigations:

> (1*) Original investigative reporting involves reporters themselves uncovering and documenting activities that have been previously unknown to the public. (2) Interpretive investigative reporting brings together publicly available information in a new, more complete context with the goal of providing a deeper public understanding of the issues at hand. (3) Reporting on investigations develops from discovery or a leak of information from an official investigation already underway or in preparation by others, usually government agencies or law enforcement. (pp. 205-211)*

Naturally, these are overlapping categories. Reporting on official investigations may develop into both original and interpretive reporting. Conversely, original investigative reporting may spark official investigations, which in turn can receive meta-coverage by news outlets. The blurred boundaries between these subcategories illustrate a problem with all normative definitions devised by elite organisations such as IRE, namely that some of the four attributes, especially originality, tend to unravel when tested empirically against conditions on the ground. In one recent study from Switzerland, Wuergler and Cancela (2022) found that very few investigative stories are actually self-initiated. Instead, stories tend to arise in the "ordinary" news ecosystem and are either spawned from daily news coverage, generated from other investigations (reporters from competing outlets try to dig more in the same place or replicate the framework and method to other contexts) or based on document leaks, data leaks, and tip-offs. They argue that this suggests that the investigative ecosystem is interconnected with the wider journalistic ecosystem, as well as journalists' source networks and the PR ecosystem (p. 15). This resonates with Feldstein (2006), who found that although investigative reporters are among journalism's most independent actors, they are often still dependent on establishment sources and vulnerable to their manipulation (p. 506). The normative notion that investigative reporters rarely 'cooperate' with sources is also questioned by Lanosga and Martin (2018), who found that policy results actually happen more often when investigative stories are initiated by sources.

2.2.3 The Epistemology of Investigative Journalism

Regardless of the academic debate pertaining to originality and source relationships, investigative journalism is usually demarcated by scholars as the most empirically grounded form of journalism (Ettema & Glasser, 1998; Parasie, 2015). Questions of what journalists know, how they know what they know, and how they display and justify their knowledge in news texts are central to the study of the epistemologies of journalism, a strand of scholarship that has grown rapidly in recent years as a response to the digitalisation of the media industry (Ekström & Westlund, 2019b). A general premise in this subfield is that journalistic knowledge is produced according to different epistemologies. Epistemologies are shaped over time by social practices and condition dispositions, beliefs, values, and epistemic standards that influence journalistic conduct by setting up seemingly objectified and sometimes tacit predefined patterns of action and meaning-making that help journalists transform information into news (Carlson, 2022; Ekström, 2002, p. 269).[12] A study that has been formative for this line of thinking is James Ettema and Theodore Glasser's phenomenological examination of the epistemology of investigative journalism (1985).[13] Based on interviews with members of a small investigative unit at a local

[12] See chapter three for more on journalistic epistemologies.

[13] This study serves as a theoretical fulcrum in all three articles. Still, I think it is necessary to unpack the core argument in detail already here in the framing introduction because it is so fundamental for how investigative journalism is understood in this thesis. It is also worth noting that despite its great applicability, Ettema & Glasser's article can be criticised for several shortcomings. First, if one reads closely, their argument does not have much empirical support. The data are primarily derived from only one reporter (who happens to be an active member of IRE) and "his thinking on the subject" (1985, p. 12). Second, they also fail to nuance the role that authoritative sources have historically played in investigative journalism (Feldstein, 2007).

TV station, they argue that the most significant attribute that distinguishes investigative journalism *empirically* from other forms of journalism is how investigative reporters more consciously confront their responsibility for the truth of their stories, which in turn affects how they justify their knowledge.[14] Ettema and Glasser identify three distinguishable phases in the process of justification in investigative journalism. The first phase involves justifying that a tip or an idea has investigative potential and can result in a story that has an "effect" in terms of setting the agenda. In this phase, reporters do not have to prove that the story they wish to investigate is true. All they must do is demonstrate that it *could be* real. If granted permission to investigate, the second phase involves collecting as much evidence as possible, preferably in multiple forms, relating to the inquiry in question. Since the reality of the past is only accessible indirectly through its traces, investigative reporters must build the truth from the ground up using documents, witness media, or other material artifacts. The collected evidence is then weighed according to a socially produced hierarchy of evidence that determines their epistemic weight. In the unit Ettema & Glasser studied, an act of transgression caught on videotape was regarded as the heaviest kind of evidence, followed by incriminating paper documents and accounts by participatory witnesses, including confessions. Lower in the hierarchy was circumstantial evidence such as accounts by non-participatory witnesses. In this phase of the justification process, evidence both for and against the charge of wrongdoing must be weighed. In the third and last phase, the investigation is turned into a story that is assembled and evaluated according to institutionalised verification standards (pp. 13-23), which Ettema and Glasser in their later book *Custodians of Conscience* (1998) argue are "embedded in the tacit knowledge of the craft" (p. 152). According to the two scholars, journalistic verification is a practical and rigorous endeavour that entails a careful arrangement and juxtaposition of accounts that are pieced together and verified, not in correspondence with reality (which remains unavailable) but in correspondence with each other. If accounts diverge or if there are unsolvable lapses between accounts, investigative reporters

[14] I elaborate on and contrast the epistemological principles of beat journalism with investigative journalism in the articles. See also Ekström et al. (2021) for a more recent study of the epistemology of breaking news.

must choose to believe one account over another and take responsibility for that belief:

> *(…) in the real world of investigative journalism, reporters must not only work to verify the grounds for their claims, they must also consciously decide to accept those grounds. As something going on in the real world, then, the condition of having sufficient grounds prepossess not only the process of collecting, evaluating, and assembling those grounds but also the process of deciding to accept or choosing to believe, that they are sufficient. (p. 158)*

It follows from this that having and presenting the grounds to justify a knowledge claim is not the same as verifying a knowledge claim. While verification is a practical procedure that is based on empirical correspondence that may serve as grounds for justification, justification can also be achieved through arguments and reasoning, circumstantial evidence, and outsourcing epistemic responsibility. Nevertheless, the crux of their argument is that the epistemology of investigative journalism is characterised by an inherent scepticism toward knowledge claims in general. Since stories in investigative journalism often are self-initiated or may stem from unreliable sources, knowledge claims are usually not accepted at face value without being subjugated to extensive source criticism and verification. In theory, this logic of scepticism pertains to authoritative sources as well. While bureaucrats, government agencies, and law enforcement in daily news coverage are regarded as professional knowers whose knowledge claims often are accepted as pre-justified (Ericson et al., 1987; Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978), their socially distributed epistemic status tends to be nullified when they themselves become the targets of journalistic investigations (Danielson, 2023).

2.2.4 The Morality of Investigative Journalism

Another important point made by Ettema and Glasser is that pivotal knowledge claims in investigative journalism also may be justified on moral grounds. By exposing transgressions and challenging systemic injustices, "investigative reporters foreground an urge not just to get at the truth but also to clarify the difference between right and wrong" (De Burgh, 2008, pp. 15-16). According to Ettema and

Glasser,[15] this makes investigative journalism essentially a moral enterprise that defends traditional virtue by telling stories of terrible vice.[16] They argue that the task of the investigative reporters is to "evoke outrage at the violation of dearly held values in the conduct of public affairs and implicitly invite, if not explicitly demand, a return to those values" (1988, p. 12). This is mainly achieved through the skilful use of different storytelling techniques such as point of view, ironic detail, and ritual denial, which together plot events and characters into a recognisable moralistic story in which the matter of innocence cannot exist without the antimatter of guilt. However, to establish that a transgression is, in fact, a transgression, moral standards must also be objectified. According to Ettema and Glasser, this entails transforming "moral claims into empirical claims so that ultimately the evaluative standards used to appraise the transgression appear as empirically unambiguous as the evidence used to document its existence" (1998, p. 71). Evaluation standards can be drawn from "the law; formalized documents, codes, and guidelines; recognized expertise, statistical comparisons; and commonsense interpretations of fairness and decency" (pp. 71-72). In other words, when outsourced and objectified, these moral standards appear as objective criteria and not something that reporters themselves explicitly advocate for. Similarly, personal emotions such as anger, despite being a driving force in investigative journalism that can be both apt and prudent in the investigative process, are never expressed explicitly in news texts (Stupart, 2022). When journalists want to infuse their reporting with emotions while refraining from discussing their own, they outsource the emotional labour to sources by letting them describe and discuss their feelings (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013). Thus, investigative journalism is a form of journalism that appears, on the surface, to be both detached and impartial. This is mainly accomplished by employing a range of narrative strategies that together suppress, outsource, and objectify emotions and value

[15] In this article, Ettema and Glasser (1988) draw heavily on the work of post-modern philosopher Louis O. Mink (1978) and historian Hayden White (1980). Ten years later, they rework the article into a book chapter in *Custodians of Conscience* (1998). See also Fisher (1984) and Bruner (1991).

[16] According to Aucoin (2007), muckrakers of the early 20th century rejected the individual story and instead emphasised larger social issues, thus employing different narrative strategies than American mainstream investigative journalism in the post-Watergate era, which is the focus of Ettema and Glasser.

judgments – all of which are perceived to undermine the appearance of objectivity and journalistic professionalism (Muñoz-Torres, 2012).

2.2.5 The Impact of Investigative Journalism

Despite attempts to hide where their sympathy lies by employing strategic rituals of objectivity and emotionality, investigative reporters are usually deeply engaged in the issues they investigate. According to Protess et al. (1991, p. 6), "a basic goal [in investigative journalism] is to trigger agenda-building processes to produce "reformist" outcomes – policy changes that promote democracy, efficiency or social justice." However, research has found that investigative journalists are far from monolithic in their views of what their role should be in terms of pushing for reforms based on the problems they uncover (Lanosga & Houston, 2017, p. 1116). While most reporters want to see results from their stories, they tend to differ in their views on how to engage actively with policymakers to bring this about. A central premise in the literature is that democracy and investigative journalism are mutually interdependent (Karadimitriou et al., 2022). This is particularly evident in studies on investigative journalism in less-functioning democracies in Europe and Latin America, which indicate that the prevalence and impact of investigative journalism are severely crippled without certain socio-economic conditions and cooperative accountability institutions (Gerli et al., 2018; Pinto, 2008; Stetka & Örnebring, 2013). Similarly, in a recent interview study with 90 investigative journalists from 60 different countries, Kunert, Brüggemann, et al. (2022) found that the obstacles pertaining to investigative journalism are significant, particularly in the Global South. Taken together, these studies indicate that the possibilities and constraints of investigative journalism are strongly conditioned by the contexts in which investigative reporters operate. This is easy to forget, particularly at a time when investigative journalism is predominantly portrayed in the research literature as a collaborative, global phenomenon driven by the advent of technology.

2.2.6 Investigative Journalism in the Digital Age

In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in investigative journalism both among journalists and academics (Carson, 2021; De Burgh & Lashmar, 2021; Hahn

& Stalph, 2018). This must be viewed in connection with the disruptive developments in the media industry, the global decline in institutional trust, the accelerated datafication of society, and the current public discourse about the state of the digital sphere, which is diagnosed as undergoing an epistemic crisis (Neuberger et al., 2023; Steensen, 2019). Against this backdrop, the increase in fact-checking organisations and the reconsolidation of watchdog reporting as core journalistic activities are not accidental but rather direct responses from the media industry to new structural realignments and global concerns regarding information complexity and threats of mis- and disinformation (Cheruiyot & Ferrer-Conill, 2018; Graves, 2018). In what is perceived as an increasingly hostile and chaotic digital environment, investigative journalism is important not just as a performative practice but also as a normative ideal for the self-understanding and professional identity of all journalists, even if they personally do not conduct investigative work (Cancela et al., 2021; Harcup, 2015, p. 108). Recent research on investigative reporting seems to align its frames of understanding with the greater research field of digital journalism studies. According to Steensen and Westlund (2021, p. 69), studies of digital journalism tend to emphasise change over stability and are mainly preoccupied with the present and the future, oscillating between a state of crisis and optimism on behalf of journalism. The catalyst of this dualistic notion is digitalisation, which has led to a decentralisation and dislocation of the news, which essentially means that much of today's news is produced and circulated by non-journalists on platforms that are owned by big tech companies (Ekström & Westlund, 2019a; Ryfe, 2019a). These new dynamics between journalists, audiences, and technological infrastructures have undermined traditional journalistic gatekeeping and caused a decline in readership, a decrease in advertisement money, and consequently financial problems for the media industry (Steensen & Westlund, 2021). In a climate of economic instability, time-consuming and resource-draining forms of journalism like investigative reporting run the risk of being deprioritised (Cordell, 2009; Hamilton, 2016). From this point of view, technology and digitalisation are conceived of as existential threats to investigative journalism. Yet, this is just one part of the story. Investigative journalism in the digital age may be under pressure because it is costly, but it has by no means completely vanished (Knobel, 2018). Instead, what has happened is that investigative journalism has cemented itself into an elite phenomenon, being conducted mostly by the biggest and wealthiest legacy outlets (Hamilton, 2016). In an older study of investigative journalism in local newspapers in Sweden, Lars Nord (2007) found it to be an idealised concept without significant importance for daily journalistic practices (p. 520). While there is a gap between the prevalence of investigative journalism in national and local outlets both in Scandinavia and USA (Danielson & Nykvist, 2023; Knobel, 2018; Nygren, 2020), there has concurrently been a rise in investigative non-profit organisations located at the periphery of the journalistic field (Birnbauer, 2018; Cooper, 2021; Konow Lund, 2020). These organisations have pushed investigative reporting in a more collaborative, global, and technological direction, which in turn has affected how investigative journalism is conducted in legacy organisations (Houston, 2010).[17] The result is that advanced forms of data journalism have become integral to watchdog reporting, allowing journalists to increase collaboration across newsrooms and make more far-reaching and empirically grounded knowledge claims than ever before (Carson & Farhall, 2018). From this point of view, technology and digitalisation are conceived of as forms of salvation, which investigative reporters should take advantage of to uphold the legitimisation and societal relevance of professional journalism.

2.2.7 The Emergence of Data Journalism

While it is well-documented that investigative journalism has in recent years expanded its epistemic practices by becoming more digital, visual, and data-driven, there is disagreement among scholars on whether these developments are epistemic breaks or in fact hybridisations and reconfigurations of well-established practices. In one of the earliest contributions on the promises of computational journalism to investigative reporting, Flew et al. (2012) concluded that “(...) computational

[17] Organisations like Bellingcat, Forensic Architecture, Airwars, SITU Research, ProPublica, the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, The Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR) in California, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists in Washington, the Organized Crime and Corruption Project in Bosnia, have all made their mark on investigative journalism in recent years. The same pertains to NGOs like Global Witness, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Greenpeace’s Unearthed and Amnesty’s Digital Verification Corp/Evidence Lab.

journalism brings a major new development to the field of journalism, and it is not, by any means, *business as usual* (…)" (p. 168). Writing on the digital transformation of investigative journalism, Hahn and Stalph (2018) note that "a binary distinction between digital and analog journalism is becoming extinct" (p. 3). Gearing (2021) goes even further and argues that "[so] revolutionary is this power [of technology] that it makes previous theories of the practice of analog journalism less relevant" (p. 19). Such proclamations of paradigmatic change are met with scepticism by other scholars who argue that the enduring institutionalised principles of journalism have historically shaped the use of technology at least as much as the technology has influenced journalistic practice (Karlsen & Stavelin, 2014; Linden, 2017; Tandoc & Oh, 2017; Zelizer, 2019).[18] Doubtlessly, WikiLeaks, the Snowden files and in particular the Panama Papers are all important milestones in the history of collaborative data-driven investigative journalism (Boland-Rudder & Fitzgibbon, 2021). However, acknowledging the significance of these recent revelations in popularising the use of data and datasets in watchdog reporting is possible without losing sight of a more distant, yet formative, past. A book that empirically supports these words of caution is *Apostles of Certainty* by Cristopher W. Anderson (2018). In the book, Anderson gives a more nuanced account of the emergence of data journalism and its historical relationship to investigative journalism by tracing and historising how quantitative data has been mobilised as evidence in American journalism since the beginning of the 20th century. The book's point of departure is in principle the same as Aucoin (2005), namely that data journalism, just like investigative journalism, has a history that precedes the emergence of the term, and that the term 'data journalism' today functions as a marker of professional authority that both inspires and regulates journalistic practice. What makes Anderson's account unique is his genealogical approach and comparative sensibility toward adjacent epistemic fields. While Aucoin largely tells an internal organisational history of IRE, Anderson shows how journalism and the social sciences, especially sociology,

[18] Obviously, the influence of technology is stronger in emerging forms of journalism that are digital in their DNA, such as live blogging (Matheson & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020) and independent data journalism (IDJ) (Ramsälv, Ekström & Westlund (2023).

crystalise into distinct knowledge disciplines during the first half of the 20th century, and how they, during this process, both inspired and criticised each other in various boundary disputes. One of the core arguments in the book is that the developments usually discussed today under the umbrella term 'data journalism' are largely extensions and refinements of concepts and technologies developed in the post-World War II era:

> *The increased digitization of databases, especially government data; the speed afforded to journalism by computers; the increasing prestige of investigative journalism; a focus on the importance of patterns rather than incidents; and articulations that journalism needed to go beyond "he said she said" objectivity, all pre-dates the internet. (p. 135)*

Anderson acknowledges that digital technology has changed many of the day-to-day practices of journalism, but argues nevertheless that it is less important for the overall epistemology and culture of news: "(…) the essentials of the evidentiary work and reporting practices of data journalism were primarily codified decades earlier" (2018, p. 136).[19] The history of how precision journalism came into being and later transformed into data journalism[20] reveals three important insights that have influenced how this thesis understands change in investigative journalism. First, investigative journalism is a form of journalism that is particularly wary of epistemic currents and consequently susceptible to adopting evidentiary practices from other knowledge-producing fields (Houston, 2010). Second, these adaptations are, however, seldom implemented directly by completely overwriting already institutionalised journalistic practices. Rather, new epistemic practices are modified,

[19] Anderson notes that the historical emergence of data journalism and investigative journalism are interlocked and conditioned by new institutional dynamics that arose in the border area between the journalistic and scientific fields during the 1970s and 1980s in the United States. The University of Missouri is important in this regard as it became the home of both IRE (in 1978) and NICAR (National Insitute for Computer-Assisted Reporting) (in 1989). Two years later, the two organisations merged, thus forging the bond between data journalism and investigative journalism: "(...) the association of CAR with investigative journalism also helped shape the type of news stories that were associated with "computer work" and the manner through which CAR techniques diffused across newsrooms. CAR became, in effect, the preserve of elite journalists doing high-level news work" (Anderson, 2018, p. 126).

[20] Today, data journalism is a broad term that encapsulates three overlapping ideal types of data-driven journalism: computer-assisted reporting (CAR), data journalism, and computational journalism (Coddington, 2015).

combined, or integrated with more traditional ways of doing journalism (Kunert, Frech, et al., 2022; Morini, 2023; Parasie, 2015). Third, data-driven investigative journalism is deeply influenced by the social sciences, which seem equally important to the epistemological principles of data journalism than the constant addition of new emerging technologies (Anderson, 2018; Parasie, 2022).

2.2.8 Data and Open Sources in Investigative Journalism

Nonetheless, there is no doubt that technology has affected the use of data in investigative journalism in profound ways. While Philip Meyer and his precision journalism fellows had to punch in their analogue raw data manually to digitise it, raw data today are usually digital by nature (Tong & Zuo, 2021). This fundamental change in data materiality has affected how data are collected, processed, and archived by investigative reporters (Felle, 2016). Moreover, continuous advancements in computing in the last three decades – the latest being the implementation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology into newsrooms – have gradually scaled the volume and pace of data harvesting, data generating, data analysis, and data presentation (Stray, 2019).[21] But most importantly, technology has changed the general availability of data (Gynnild, 2014a). In an open, participatory, and networked media environment, data are everywhere. Today, investigative reporters can map information on individuals, groups, interactions, and opinions otherwise hard to access, thus widening their net of potential evidence and ultimately what they can claim to know (Larsen, 2017). One of the major driving forces in advancing the use of openly available digital data in journalism has been the upsurge in user-generated photographs and videos spreading on social media platforms (Allan, 2013; Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2012; Gynnild, 2017; Mortensen, 2014). The rise of so-called digital witnessing and its impact on professional photojournalism and conflict reporting has received much academic attention (for overviews see Ashuri & Pinchevski, 2009; Pantti, 2020). A key premise in this literature is that ordinary citizens and emerging networked visual technologies have

[21] AI technology has also shown promise when it comes to developing story ideas for investigative projects (Broussard, 2015).

created new types of witnessing and subsequently new forms of political activism that have challenged state-controlled regimes of visibilities and upended the image monopoly of professional news organisations (Adami, 2016; Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2012; Mortensen & McCrow-Young, 2022). The increased proliferation and circulation of raw media evidence on global communication platforms have in turn fostered new evidentiary- and aesthetic practices across a range of entangled knowledge-producing fields (Dubberley et al., 2020). Anden-Papadopoulos (2020) argues that an "image-as-forensic-evidence" economy has developed in the wake of the Syrian civil war, in which different stakeholders including war crime investigators, human rights organisations, and journalists are both competing and collaborating for jurisdictional control. What unites these different stakeholders is that they all are part of a broader interdisciplinary movement that primarily self-identifies as open-source investigators (Ganguly, 2022; Müller & Wiik, 2021; Ristovska, 2022). The epistemic work of these investigators centres around what they often refer to as "OSINT methods".[22] The term "OSINT" stands for open source intelligence and originated in the intelligence community (Block, 2023).[23] But in the context of investigative journalism and human rights monitoring, OSINT has simply come to signify "the process of identifying, collecting, and/or analyzing open-source information as part of an investigative process" (Dubberley et al., 2020, p. 9). Scholars have noted that an advantage of working with openly available sources from an accountability perspective is that it fosters transparency and enables audience participation "giving journalists the chance to act as gate openers for different skills and competencies, perspectives, actors and actants, that is, coordinating collaborations and efforts to forward public interest" (Müller & Wiik, 2021, p. 18) in what Kovach and Rosenstiel (2021, p. 60) call "organized collaborative intelligence". Investigative journalists have always worked with open sources, but "remote sensing devices such as satellite imagery, camera-enabled smartphones, body cameras,

[22] For an overview of OSINT tools and methods see Silverman, 2014; Trewinnard & Bell, 2018.

[23] The term OSINT has become more mainstream after the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Its uptake among self-proclaimed OSINTers in the Twitter-sphere has recently made it a particularly contested concept among intelligence scholars (Hatfield, 2023).

surveillance cameras, and dashboard cameras provide new and easily accessible tools to circumvent government and other traditional information gatekeepers" (Koettl et al., 2020, p. 18). In a recent interview study with 30 investigative journalists working mainly with open sources at the *BBC* and the investigative collective *Bellingcat*, Manisha Ganguly (2022) found that "OSINT tools have opened up new lines of inquiry, but instead of creating more free time to pursue more complex problems that require human creativity, they have actually created more work (…)" (p. 330). She concludes that emerging technologies are secondary to methodology: "While the tools have automated some routine tasks, the results still need to be checked by a human, and human intervention is indispensable if not the bedrock of OSINT investigations" (p. 341). At the heart of open source investigations is the use of collected eyewitness images, which are granted the status of truth claims through the demonstration of rigorous verification practices (Ristovska, 2022, p. 633). While the growing procedural focus on the verification of images of terror and war in Western journalism has received much scholarly attention (Brandtzaeg et al., 2016; Pantti & Sirén, 2015), the same focus has also been criticised for suppressing the political agency and suffering of local image-makers (Anden-Papadopoulos, 2020; Chouliaraki, 2015a, 2015b). As noted by Sandra Ristovska (2022): "Eyewitness images are not simply data but embodied testimonies of people who risk their lives to inform the world about traumatic events" (p. 641). Similarly, Chouliaraki and Al-Ghazzi (2022) argue that the epistemic logic of "digital forensics" often employed in investigative conflict reporting tends to suppress the moral appeal inherent in these corporeal acts of witnessing. They propose the concept of "flesh witnessing" to capture analytically the dialectical affordances of user-generated digital content. While this thesis sympathises with this important line of criticism, its scope of analysis remains centred on how visuals are used as both evidentiary objects and storytelling agents from a journalistic perspective. In doing so, it simultaneously rejects the notion that the visuality of investigative journalism is solely based on open sources and externally produced visual material. The fact remains that investigative reporters are also dependent on secretive sources and self-produced photographs to serve their self-proclaimed democratic function (MacFadyen, 2008). Accordingly, there seems to be a symbiotic relationship between the overt and covert, and the collaborative and independent, which together underscore the complexities inherent in the epistemic work of investigative reporters and points towards a multiplicity of visualities.

2.2.9 The Visualities of Investigative Journalism

Over the past decade, interdisciplinary organisations such as *Forensic Architecture* and *Bellingcat* have made their mark in the field of investigative journalism by introducing novel approaches to visual investigations, instigating what some scholars have termed as a “forensic turn” (Fuller & Weizman, 2021; Gates, 2020, 2023; Lowe, 2020; Smith & Watson, 2023). [24] Nevertheless, the visuality of investigative journalism is much more diverse and older than the breakthrough of these organisations would suggest. In fact, documentary photography has been part of journalism’s arsenal of evidence against oppressors and wrongdoers ever since Jacob Riis, who is considered a pioneer in photojournalism and an early muckraker, used his camera to expose the inhuman conditions of New York’s East-End slums in the late 1890s. Similarly, the first data visualisation published in an investigative context can be dated back to 1881 when Henry Lloyd published a full-page graphic as part of an extensive documentation of a landgrab carried out by Rockefeller and Standard Oil (Aucoin, 2005, pp. 30-31). Despite this historical link, investigative journalism has rarely been recognised as a visual form of reporting. This can partly be attributed to investigative journalism’s emergence and popularisation as a term during the 1960s. Scholars have suggested that the establishment of investigative reporting as a distinct Pulitzer category made it into a practice primarily associated with print journalism, which at the time was incredibly text-centric (Knobel, 2018; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2021). An unintended consequence of this was that investigative reporters came to prefer written and oral sources for their stories, while visual documentary evidence came to belong to the fields of photojournalism, and documentary filmmaking (see for example Gaines & Renov, 1999; Newton, 2001). It seems that the visuality of

[24] I will elaborate on what is theoretically meant by ‘forensic’ in chapter three.

what was considered investigative journalism in newspapers in the pre-Internet Era was in many ways taken for granted, thereby echoing the status of news images in general: "For most journalists, news images have always taken a back seat to words. Since the photographs' inception in the mid-1800s, pictures have long been seen as the fluff of journalism, the stuff that illustrates but is adjunct to verbal descriptions" (Zelizer, 2004, p. 118). Historically, the feeble interest in visuals among investigative reporters has been echoed by the research literature, which has rarely paid attention to the evidentiary status of the visual nor provided any analysis of the different visualities of investigative journalism.[25] The exception is a handful of older contributions centred around investigative journalism on TV (Ekström, 2002; Ettema & Glasser, 1998) who briefly address how storytelling techniques and the medium of linear television condition the forms of knowledge being produced:

> *Visualization is television's forte. Knowledge about the world is articulated visually. The medium represents reality, creates powerful engagement, identification, fascination, thoughts, and values through pictures (...) Even in the case of investigative journalism a good portion of the production process is oriented directly or indirectly toward visualization. Access to good visual material actually decides what gets investigated (Ekström, 2002, pp. 264-265).*

Despite being written two decades ago, Mats Ekström (2002) highlights here some general observations pertaining to investigative journalism on TV that can in fact be said to apply to nearly all forms of investigative journalism today. In a digital attention economy that privileges visual modes of knowing (Ristovska, 2018), even the most text-based investigative news story is usually equipped with some sort of visual element, either a compelling image or an interesting piece of data visualisation, in order to secure audience-reach (Young et al., 2018). Indeed, today's readers take the presence of visuals as given, and most online newspapers are designed with templates that by default display numerous visuals as part of their story infrastructure.

[25] Obviously, there is an extensive body of literature on both visual evidence and visual storytelling (which I am using heavily in the articles). My point here in the framing introduction is simply that this literature is rarely referenced in the general scholarship of investigative journalism. Conversely, much of the visual literature fails to distinguish between different forms of journalism and engage with important works on investigative journalism. In two of the articles, I have attempted to bridge the gaps between these strands of literature by making them talk with each other more directly.

While it can be argued that this form of visuality is secondary and primarily driven by illustrative concerns, the visual still plays a significant role in concert with other co-existing modalities, together affecting how knowledge claims are articulated, implied, and justified. Of course, there is a big difference between this way of using visuals and *visual investigations*, which take the image itself as their site of inquiry. Nevertheless, any study of investigative news texts that ignores the presence of the visual runs the risk of missing an important aspect of what makes investigative reporting so persuasive. Since the literature on visual investigative journalism is so meagre, it is necessary to turn to other scholarly contexts for reflections on the epistemic role visuals may play. Writing on images of terror, John Huxford (2004) argues that news photos usually serve three overlapping functions in news texts, which enable different epistemological positionings of the reader: *surveillance*, *witnessing*, and *spectatorship*. *Surveillance* refers to how images in themselves may invoke the press's watchdog role by visually representing what normally eludes the public eye (p. 4). Akin to this is *witnessing*, which in the context of Huxford's schemata is crucial for establishing journalistic authority (Zelizer, 2007, p. 425) by "freezing time and transporting the reader /viewer to the scene of the event being covered" (Huxford, 2004, p. 5). Lastly, in a more enigmatic vein lies the function of *spectatorship*, which by invoking the gaze of the voyeur "allows the news to garner ratings by fulfilling its audience's need for "entertainment" and stimulation through compelling images that viewers find difficult to either ignore or forget" (p. 7).[26] Transferred to the context of investigative journalism, this triad can be plotted against a continuum of visual authorship, which on the one hand sees images as professionally produced and on the other externally sourced – most news stories can contain a bit of both. When visuals are professionally produced, the function of surveillance is mediated primarily through the eyes of the journalist as portraits of victims in despair; stake-out photographs or hidden camera recordings of transgressors caught in the act; or aerial footage of inaccessible properties, crime

[26] Critical readers will see that a similar version of this paragraph is used in article three, but I use the triad a bit differently here in the framing introduction and stretch Huxford's argument even further.

scenes, and other places that are central to the wrongdoings being investigated. Journalistic witnessing in investigative journalism is thus usually singular and often either belated or conducted in a clandestine manner (MacFadyen, 2008, p. 148). However, when visuals are externally sourced, the function of surveillance expands from being only embodied in the content of the revelatory image to also including meta-questions regarding its veracity and authenticity. The surveilling function thus duplicates from the external world onto the image itself, transforming it into data that need to be sorted, scrutinised, and verified (Godulla, 2018; Higgins, 2018). Simultaneously, the act of bearing witness, which is now outsourced and conducted in the present as events unfold, multiplies. Instead of seeing events through the eyes of a single journalist, events are now showcased from a plethora of viewpoints that include non-human actors such as surveillance cameras (Gates, 2013; Gynnild, 2014c), commercial satellites (Seo, 2020), drones (Gynnild, 2014b), and human actors such as citizens (Allan, 2013), perpetrators and transgressors (Mortensen, 2022; Sandhu & Trottier, 2023) and activists and bystanders (Bock, 2021, pp. 145-168) forming a multiplicity of viewpoints that Ford and Richardson (2023) call "data witnessing". In other words, there is a crucial temporal, numerical, perspectival, and epistemological difference between these two distinct yet co-existing ways of visualising events in today's investigative journalism. While the first vision adheres to the logic of traditional photojournalism, which sees the image as a revelatory pre-justified truth claim, the latter follows the logic of data journalism, which sees the image as a testimony that *can* be turned into a networked and verified piece of evidence. However, what both these investigative visions have in common is their tendency to lapse into *spectatorship*, which despite being a more subtle function is very much present in investigative journalism regardless of visual authorship because of the relentless focus on transgressions of the legal and moral order (Ettema & Glasser, 1998). Taken together, this calls for a careful examination of how these different co-existing ways of seeing are affected by the epistemology of investigative journalism but also informed by visual modes of knowing in other knowledge-producing fields. As noted by Michael Griffin (2018): "(…) the study of visual images should be approached in terms of the streams of media content of which they are a part and the fields of social relations, cultural capital, and power that direct their circulation” (p. 328). Consequently, the visual must be studied in and across different contexts, which is exactly what this thesis attempts.

3. Theoretical Perspectives

This chapter aims to outline the theoretical foundations of the three empirical articles more broadly and discuss how they relate to each other through three different, yet interconnected, theoretical lenses.[27] I call these lenses boundaries, epistemologies, and visibilities. Together, they constitute the theoretical framework of the thesis that facilitates the mounting of an argument that understands investigative reporting as a distinctive yet malleable form of journalistic knowledge work with porous boundaries, expanding epistemic practices, and multiple visibilities.

3.1 Boundaries

Studying how investigative journalism comes to be demarcated from other types of journalism is essentially a question of mapping social boundaries and how journalists engage in so-called boundary work. Studies of boundaries are common in both the social sciences (Lamont & Molnár, 2002) and in science and technology studies (Roosth & Silbey, 2009). The theoretical lens of boundaries employed in this thesis is attributed to Thomas F. Gieryn (1983, 1999). In the last decade, his boundary work approach has been widely used in journalism studies, inspiring both empirical investigations and discipline-specific theory development geared toward capturing how the opposing forces of stability and change are affecting the journalistic field (Carlson & Lewis, 2015, 2020).

3.1.1 Journalistic Boundary Work

Originally focusing on demarcations in the history of science, Gieryn (1983) defines boundary work as the “attribution of selected characteristics to the institution of science (i.e., to its practitioners, methods, stock of knowledge, values and work organization) for purposes of constructing a social boundary that distinguishes some intellectual activities as "non-science"” (p. 782). Rejecting both essentialist theories

[27] It is important to note that I have worked with many different theories in this project. In general, my approach toward theory has been explorative and pragmatic. In other words, my aim has not been to master one specific theory but to explore how different theoretical perspectives and concepts may work in different empirical contexts. In hindsight, I see that this approach has come with some disadvantages that I will reflect upon a bit more in chapter four.

and functionalists' explanations of scientific authority (e.g. Merton, 1973; Popper, [1959]2002), Gieryn (1999) outlines a theoretical framework that shifts the sociological attention from science's intrinsic properties and self-proclaimed rationality to the discursive struggle that *surrounds* science as a cultural practice, thus encouraging a detailed examination of "how people in society negotiate and provisionally settled for themselves the borders and territories of science" (p. 27). For Gieryn, scientific authority is not possessed by scientists nor decided internally in the laboratory, through peer reviews, or in the use of scientific instruments. Rather, he argues that the epistemic authority[28] of science is *enacted* and decided downstream as scientific claims leave the lab and enter credibility contests between different actors and stakeholders who by invoking science on their behalf explicitly and implicitly demarcate who gets to call themselves a scientist, what counts as proper scientific knowledge, and, ultimately, what science is. Influenced by Gieryn's constructionist approach, Matt Carlson and Seth Lewis (2020) have been among the main proponents of reconciling the boundary work framework with journalism studies. They transpose Gieryn's three main processes of boundary work, namely *expulsion*, *expansion*, and *protection of autonomy* (1999, pp. 15-17), to the field of journalism and argue that its boundaries are discursively negotiated in three different analytical domains, related to journalism's (1) participants, (2) practices, and (3) propositions. At the core of the boundary work approach lies the notion that boundaries vary across space and time and signify differences by creating explicit and implicit distinctions between insiders and outsiders, good and bad, and right and wrong. In essence, boundary disputes are symbolic contests for prestige, legitimacy, and control, but they are also material struggles concerning the distribution of resources (Carlson & Lewis, 2020, p. 126). If we are to boldly summarise the research on journalistic boundaries in one broad sweeping claim, one could say that it has primarily been directed at the fringes of journalism, where the struggle over journalism's identity, practices, and norms has often been both loud and confrontational and thus quite easy to document empirically

[28] Partly influenced by Paul Starr (1982) and Max Weber (1978), Thomas F. Gieryn defines epistemic authority as "the legitimate power to define, describe, and explain bounded domains of reality" (1999, p. 1).

(see Eldridge II, 2019; Maares & Hanusch, 2022).[29] This thesis takes a different approach and turns the theoretical lens of boundaries inwards to examine the more subtle delineation processes that take place *within* journalism, where certain actors attempt to construct investigative journalism as a distinct journalistic sub-discipline. In addition to this geographical redirection, this analytical move also involves stretching the boundary work concept itself. Following Carlson (2016), the thesis assumes that the boundaries of investigative journalism are constructed and contested in the meta-talk that surrounds investigative journalism as epistemic work and cultural practice (article one). However, the thesis also assumes that the boundaries of investigative journalism are woven into the very fabric of the news (articles two and three). This notion is derived from Barnes et al. (1996), who argue that the internal boundaries of science are first and foremost implicitly drawn through practical work:

> *Scientists do not engage in the 'social' activity of making boundaries, and the 'technical' activity of doing science within these boundaries as two qualitatively different kinds of action. For the most part they create and sustain boundaries in the course of, as part of the business of, doing science (Barnes et al., 1996, p. 155).*

Similarly, the thesis argues that every single published news story contains traces of implicit boundary work. By merely existing under the banner of a professional news organisation, news texts indirectly reiterate or redraw the lines of what is to be considered legitimate journalism. On top of this material and implicit distinction-making, news texts can also contain more explicit rhetorical traces of boundary work. The most obvious example of the latter is when journalists attempt to strategically demonstrate their professional authority and expertise, either by explicitly positioning themselves as privileged knowers of information unknown to the public or by demonstrating specialised skills and knowledge (Lewis & Westlund, 2015). Yet, it is important to note that the boundaries of investigative journalism are not solely decided internally among journalists and hinge on much more than rhetorical strategies alone. As noted by several scholars (Canella, 2021; Ryfe, 2019b; Tong, 2018), journalism is deeply embedded in and conditioned by external structures that

[29] See article one for a more detailed review of the research of journalistic boundaries.

both enable and constrain journalistic practice. Thus, one way to better comprehend what determines the boundaries of investigative journalism is to consider it as a form of knowledge work conducted according to a specific epistemology that in itself is an object of ongoing negotiation affected by an array of internal and external forces.

3.2 Epistemologies

In journalism studies, epistemologies are usually understood as institutionalised procedures, beliefs, and values that guide the production of knowledge, including the criteria of truth, how knowledge claims are expressed, and which methods are used to gather and justify the knowledge displayed (Ekström, 2002, pp. 268-270). This theoretical lens draws inspiration from ideas originally developed in the sociology of knowledge[30] as well as more recent literature from science and technology studies (e.g. Berger & Luckmann, [1966]1991; Latour & Woolgar, 1986). A fundamental premise in this literature is that human knowledge generation is an ongoing historical social activity that is shaped by social interests and material conditions (Ward, 2018). The influence of early sociology of knowledge on journalism studies dates back to the seminal work of Robert Park (1940), who was the first to argue that news is a form of knowledge. Drawing on American pragmatist philosopher William James' (1890) two categories of knowledge, Parks notes that news is neither informal, intuitive, nor embodied, such as everyday knowledge ('acquaintance with'), nor it is formal, rational, and systematic such as scientific knowledge ('knowledge about'). Instead, Park argues that news must be placed somewhere in the middle of these two extremes. He proceeds to define news as a form of knowledge that mainly deals with isolated, unusual, and unexpected events that bring about sudden and decisive changes in the present, based on facts communicated in a comprehensible way (pp. 675-685). Although Park's assessment was written in a different era, his main point

[30] As Robert Park (1940 notes: "The question with which the sociology of knowledge is concerned is not what constitutes the validity of knowledge of statement of principle or of fact but what are the conditions under which different kinds of knowledge arise and what are the functions of each" (p. 682). Peter Berger & Thomas Luckmann ([1966]1991) argues that "the sociology of knowledge must concern itself with everything that passes for 'knowledge in society" (p. 26).

still stands. News is crucial for understanding and knowing the world, yet at the very same time impossible to dissociate from the social world it seeks to explain. Three decades after Park, ideas from the sociology of knowledge were taken up again by the first generation of newsroom ethnographers who took a special interest in how organisational routines affected the material production of news (Stonbely, 2015). Gaye Tuchman (1978) in particular, with her pioneering book *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*, drew extensively on literature from the sociology of knowledge, most notably the work of Alfred Schutz (1962), which she demonstrated could serve great relevance to the study of journalistic typification processes (Tuchman, 1978, pp. 50-63).[31] Since then, perspectives from what can be considered classical sociology of knowledge have appeared sporadically in journalism studies but more as background theories rather than concrete prisms for empirical analysis. According to Ahva and Steensen (2020, p. 43), journalism scholars tend to prefer mid-level theories that theorise the individual-organisational level of journalism or explain specific aspects of journalism over grand theories. This principle seems also to apply to the study of journalistic epistemologies, which owns much of its fundamental conceptions to Ettema and Glasser (1985, 1998) and Mats Ekström (2002). Although these authors draw inspiration from some of the literature mentioned above, their theoretical frameworks are specifically geared toward capturing the specificities of journalistic knowledge production.

3.2.1 The Epistemologies of Journalism

Mats Ekström (2002) starts by dividing the sociological study of journalistic epistemologies into three interconnected domains: (1) journalism's forms of knowledge, (2) the production of knowledge and (3) the public acceptance and legitimacy of knowledge claims. These domains can be studied separately but are nevertheless intrinsically linked. The notion that journalism offers more than *one* specific form of knowledge becomes very clear when browsing today's varied media landscape. Taking his cue from Park (1940), Rasmus Kleis Nielsen (2017) argues that new socio-digital technologies have given rise to three ideal types of digital news as

[31] She also cites Berger & Luckmann (1966), Kuhn (1962), Mannheim (1968), and Merton (1968).

mediated public knowledge: news-as-snippets, news-as-items, and news-as-relations. While news-as-items, which are basically regular individual news stories, bear many similarities to Park's middle definition and are still important, it is the dual increase in news-as-snippets and news-as-relations, placed on each side of James' continuum, that according to Nielsen (2017) characterises today's digital news:

> *Digital news is live tweeting, live blogging, and live TV coverage of breaking news, sometimes of a character where one may not feel news is any form of knowledge at all. But digital news is also long-form journalism, in-depth, detailed, data-driven interactive features, and on-demand streaming or download of well-researched current affairs or documentary programs. (p. 100)*

On the one hand, digitalisation has made the news faster, more aggregated, and more about isolated events (Anderson, 2013; Coddington, 2019). On the other hand, the news has also become slower, more empirical, more immersive, and more about relations (Hermann, 2016; Le Masurier, 2015). This prompts Nielsen (2017) to conclude that digital news gives audiences different *forms* of knowledge. Although Nielsen (2017) explicitly avoids the subject, one can infer that different forms of news as knowledge are produced according to different standards and thus demand different types of epistemic work. In other words, news-as-snippets (breaking news), located at the 'acquaintance with' end of the continuum, are produced in accordance with a different epistemology than associated with news-about-relations (investigative reporting and data journalism, which aspire to 'knowledge about'). In this regard, Matt Carlson (2022) notes "that the use of the word 'epistemology' in place of "method" or "procedure" or "practice" is an intentional one meant to encompass not just actions but the beliefs, understandings, and arguments that shape and justify these actions" (p. 64). Thus, epistemologies are not ontological entities in themselves that the researcher can 'observe', 'collect', and 'analyse' as data. Rather, they are manifested through institutionalised social practices and must be reconstructed through empirical proxies such as observable classification systems, the articulation and justification of knowledge claims, knowledge coordination, the mobilisation of evidentiary objects, and other textual and social manifestations of epistemological stances and beliefs. According to Ekström (2002), a central idea in the study of journalistic epistemologies directly lifted from the sociology of knowledge is “that social practices are classification activities that include and reproduce classifications of reality” (p. 268):

> *Journalism bears a dual relationship to such classification activities. First, journalism actively contributes to producing, reproducing, and naturalizing collective conceptions of reality. Second, journalistic work is based on classifications that serve more or less as tacit points of departure for the production of knowledge. (pp. 268-269)*

Although these two levels obviously are entwined, I have mainly concentrated on the second point, which relates to the textual and procedural aspects of journalistic epistemology (Carlson, 2022). To clarify, this thesis is mainly preoccupied with reconstructing the procedural aspects of how particular forms of reality are manufactured in news texts without evaluating or criticising possible ideologies or biases these realities may introduce and/or reproduce. From a procedural point of view, classification systems serve as mnemonic devices that set up “predefined patterns of conduct, which channel action in one direction against the many other directions that would theoretically be possible” (Berger & Luckmann, [1966]1991, p. 72). These predefined patterns help journalists determine what kind of epistemic work they need to do to ‘solve’ different types of tasks related to different types of journalistic stories (Örnebring, 2016, p. 81). Other examples of classification systems given by Ekström (2002, p. 269) are classifications of source types and whether they need verification, classifications of acceptable headlines, and classifications of who may qualify as an ‘expert’. However, classification systems are merely starting points for knowledge production, which in the context of investigative journalism can involve many different practical tasks and vary enormously from story to story. An important clarification made by Ekström (2002) in this regard is that the boundaries between different journalistic epistemologies are neither clear-cut nor set in stone. They can differ across news cultures, news outlets, and news genres (p. 270). This notion is also echoed in much recent empirical research that has documented many differences in epistemological procedures between various forms of journalism (e.g. Ekström et al., 2021; Matheson & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020). To explain the malleability of journalistic knowledge production and to account for how journalistic authority is considered legitimised outside of journalism, Carlson (2022) argues that we therefore must also consider "the contextual and performative modes" of journalistic epistemology. A central premise in this perspective is that journalistic epistemologies cannot strictly be reduced to internal institutionalised procedures. Carlson argues that journalistic epistemologies are situated in a particular time and place marked by various cultural forces, interested actors, and shifting technologies: "These external forces affect the epistemic claims journalists make, how journalists negotiate their legitimacy in the act of reporting, and how non-news actors – from hostile politicians to social media platforms – affect the epistemic claims of journalists" (p. 65). In other words, journalistic epistemologies are dynamic and malleable because they are always embedded in wider epistemic structures that affect the standards for what is considered acceptable and authoritative knowledge in society. In principle, every time an investigative reporter engages in some type of claim-making, the epistemic authority of journalism is put to the test, and the epistemological boundaries of investigative journalism are redrawn. Of course, most of the time there is mainly boundary maintenance of already institutionalised practices, but sometimes there is noticeable *expansion* as well (Gieryn, 1999), for example, when investigative journalists take inspiration and adopt epistemic practices or modes of inference from other knowledge-producing fields, or when they incorporate new digital technologies into their work. Studies of methodological advancements in journalism have shown that the main proponents of these expansions often have technological experience and/or educational backgrounds from other epistemic fields (Anderson, 2018; Müller & Wiik, 2021; Parasie, 2022). Ultimately, situating journalistic epistemologies in an array of contextual forces not only counteracts the fallacy of considering them as static and internally determined, but also raises the question of how the public comes to accept journalistic knowledge as valid and legitimate (Ekström, 2002).

3.2.2 The Mediation of Journalistic Authority

To account for how the news attains the status as trustworthy, and consequently how journalists enact and maintain their epistemic authority (Gieryn, 1999, p. 1), Matt

Carlson (2017) argues that we must consider three interrelated key premises that are worth quoting at length here:

> *First, the relationships through which the news attains authority can be understood only by accounting for an array of actors (including technological actors) both inside and outside the newsroom – reporters, owners, sources, audiences, programmers, legislators, critics, and so forth. Second, these relationships are contextual. Drawing together an array of actors, objects, and discourses into an intermeshed and variable system necessitates temporal, spatial, and cultural specificity. Third, authority cannot be explained with any single variable. How journalists align themselves as a group, the forms of news that develop, and the stories journalists tell to justify what they do all matter. A relational theory of journalistic authority is necessarily antireductionist. No single part explains the others. (p. 23)*

In other words, journalistic authority is an ongoing, contingent, and relational process in which a web of human and non-human actors is mobilised in an asymmetrical relationship through the performance of discourse. According to Carlson, journalistic authority is best understood as a right to be listened to, and ‘performance’ in this context refers to the “deliberate shaping of communicative acts to be recognizable to the audience as valid and legitimate” (Carlson, 2022, p. 68). In a digital environment, the communicative acts of journalism can take on many shapes and forms, but they are primarily found in news text, which is still journalism’s main material output and thus its very raison d'être. In addition to being declarative in tone, news texts have specific forms and styles that are “laden with epistemological premises that shape the type of knowledge they communicate and by, extension, contain an argument for their legitimation” (Carlson, 2017, p. 73). As Ekström (2002) notes:

> *Ultimately, it is by communicating within a framework of established genres, making use of a set of discursive and rhetorical techniques, that one can persuade the public that the news stories are neutral accounts, that the facts are facts, that the reportage is truthful, that the experts are reliable, that investigative journalism is important, etc. (p. 277)*

Although the forms of knowledge they contain differ significantly, news texts bear certain formal and stylistic similarities to scientific texts in the sense that both types often contain textual cues and meta-information that point towards the epistemic culture (Knorr-Cetina, 1999) that has produced them. For both journalists and scientists, text production is not some insignificant by-product; it is the very essence of their epistemic work that conditions all knowledge-generating activities (Latour & Woolgar, 1986).[32] However, it is simultaneously important to underscore that text production in both journalism and science is part of a "much more richly organized round of collective activity that both influences and is influenced by what we write [and communicate]" (Weinberg, 2009, p. 294):

> *Epistemic authority, and the legitimacy of the various epistemic standards upon which it rests, is not achieved unilaterally through textual tricks, but collectively, as all of us engaged in a given domain of knowledge production proffer mutually critical assessments of the value of our own and each other's contributions to the work and worlds we share. (p. 294)*

Nonetheless, the performative display of the epistemology undergirding the reporting is especially explicit and transparent in investigative journalism because of the often-controversial nature of the knowledge claims put forward (Broersma, 2011; Wuergler et al., 2023; Wuergler & Dubied, 2023). Accusations of malfeasance and power abuse, which may have life-changing implications for the actors involved, must be verified, or justified openly, and the relevance and importance of the reporting must be explicitly argued for to readers. This makes investigative news texts particularly useful as gateways to examine the discursive display of journalists' justificatory practices, what counts as evidence among them (and what they presume is acknowledged as acceptable evidence by their readers), and ultimately how they constitute themselves as professional people as they make a case for their epistemic authority. [33]

[32] In their influential book *Laboratory Life*, Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar (1986) examined the construction of scientific facts in the Laboratory at the Salk Institute, in San Diego, California. One of the major takeaways from their extensive fieldwork was that scientists were mostly engaged in "coding, marking, altering, correcting, reading, and writing" (p. 49); activities that essentially were pre-stages towards the end goal, which was, according to the authors, the production of scientific papers.

[33] This analytical move draws on what has been called the Weberian turn in the sociology of professions. See also Hughes (1971, p. 340) and Sarfatti Larsen (1977).

3.3 Visibilities

Accordingly, this thesis views the display of still and/or moving images in investigative news texts as one of the most important institutionalised procedures for justifying the news as true (Caple, 2013; Carlson, 2017, p. 67; Zelizer, 2010). The fact that the visual has assumed such a central role in legitimising journalistic knowledge is, of course, a gradual process that is ultimately conditioned by wider epistemic currents in human culture writ large. To understand how the visual can be mobilised as evidence in journalistic truth-telling, we must therefore zoom out from the microcosmos of journalism and examine the conflicting cultural associations that are attached to visual modes of knowing across various epistemic fields. Historically, the first enduring association that seems widespread in culture is the notion that images provide a form of mechanical objectivity simply because they contain an indexical correspondence to the real (Daston & Galison, 2007). However, all the same, and equally lasting, seems the opposite and conflicting notion that photographic meaning is socially constructed and that the visual, therefore, may also lie and deceive (Clarke, 2018). In fact, one could say that these conflicting views have haunted visual modes of knowing since the very invention of photography and continue to loom large over visual discourse to this day causing what Becker and Frosh (2015) call enduring "visual frictions". Yet, despite numerous predictions that we can no longer trust images, the visual remains a significant source of knowledge, also in the digital domain (Canals, 2020). In short, if we are to make a very generalised but nonetheless entirely true statement about the place of the visual in human culture at this current juncture in time, we can say that the image always exists in this permanent tension between the objective and the subjective, between the evidentiary and the deceptive, and between falsehood and truth. Following Allan Sekula ([1974] 1984), the thesis therefore understands images as incomplete epistemological statements that depend on an external configuration of conditions and presuppositions to be read and understood. As Sekula notes:

> *We might formulate this position as follows: a photograph communicates by means of its association with some hidden, or implicit text; it is this text, system of hidden linguistic propositions, that carries the photograph into the domain of readability. That is, the meaning of any photographic message is necessarily context determined.* (p. 4)

Sekula thus argues that we must understand the evidentiary function of the visual, not in terms of the images' correspondence to reality, but rather in relation to the contexts in which the image is entered by certain actors as a form of testimony, in what Sekula interchangeably calls the "presentational circumstances" and "the conditions" of the visual (Keenan, 2020, p. 283; Sekula, [1975] 1984, [1978] 1984). The general gist of the presentational circumstances in investigative journalism should be clear by now, but in order to unpack how the image can be used to uncover moral and legal transgressions, we must consider the very conditions of visuality in society.

3.3.1 Counter-Visibilities

"Visibilities" is a flexible theoretical prism that originally stems from visual culture studies, specifically hereunder surveillance studies. The concept of visibility underscores the agency of visuality (Foster, 1988) by signifying "acts and technologies of seeing, showing, or pointing out, and their effects" (Traue et al., 2019, p. 331). Visibility constitutes what Andrea M. Brighenti (2010) calls a sort of "social optics" that can enable both resistance and control (p. 39):

> *Visibility lies at the intersection of the two domains of aesthetics (relations of perception) and politics (relations of power). When these two terms are understood in a sufficiently broad meaning, it makes sense to say that the medium between the two domains of aesthetics and politics is the symbolic (...) Visibility is a metaphor of knowledge, but it is not simply an image: it is a real social process in itself. (Brighenti, 2007, pp. 324-325)*

In this thesis, the theoretical lens of visibilities is understood to have two interconnected analytical dimensions. The first dimension relates to how the abilities to see or be seen are facilitated and constrained by power relations and technological infrastructures through networked regimes of visibility (Brighenti, 2010). This is related to the second dimension, which concerns how certain elements in the physical field of sight or within the image itself can nevertheless be rendered visible through the counter-act of photography or other image practices that in various ways can challenge state and rogue visions (Azoulay, 2008, p. 96; Goodwin, 1994). Let me unpack this with some concrete examples. It may not be self-evident in our seemingly transparent and camera-saturated society, but there is much in the world that is kept outside of what Eyal Weizman (2017) calls the ”threshold of visibility”. The truth is that authorities and certain powerful social actors have great control over what we can see and how we are made to see by limiting our vision while simultaneously subjugating us to their own. Photo prohibitions, physical barriers, architectural infrastructures, surveillance cameras, facial recognition technologies, drones, and satellites provide these actors and institutions with control over the visual domain in a double sense (Bock, 2021). In addition to denying the public their right to look (Mirzoeff, 2011), these actors can mobilise their vision asymmetrically to exert a form of coercive power over the general public. The so-called scopic regimes of the state go back years and have been subject to extensive scholarly attention (see for example Tagg, 1988).[34] According to Sekula (1986), the visual was incorporated into the state's arsenal of suppression from the very beginning of the photograph's inception. Not only did photographs enable the construction of a physical archive of bodies, images could now also intervene in the real world by facilitating the location and apprehension of criminals and dissidents (p. 7). In certain countries, the socially produced authority of visual modes of knowing is unfortunately much indebted to how images have been used to surveil and catalogue humans by the military, police, and governments under various questionable “tactical concerns” (Sekula, [1975] 1984, pp. 34-35). What has particularly affected the epistemic status of the image across different cultures is how it has been mobilised in legal contexts (Dufour & Delage, 2015). In the legal field, the visual is usually subjected to a forensic logic in which “physical and digital objects (including documents, photographs, bodies, bones, bullets, and buildings) undergo a scientifically anchored examination and

[34] This line of thinking about the visual draws partly on ideas originally developed by Michel Foucault. Although I never directly engage with his notoriously difficult books in any of my articles, there are essentially two Foucaults lurking in the background of this thesis: The *Archeology of Knowledge*-Foucault (1972) and the *Discipline and Punishment*-Foucault (1977).

analysis" (Keenan, 2020, pp. 285-286). It is situated within such a realist epistemology, which "claims to make the most literal sense of things, emphasizing only the narrowest interpretation of evidence, at times even claiming to jettison interpretation entirely" (Gates, 2020, p. 1)", that the second analytical dimension of the theoretical prism of visibilities comes into relief. As part of a legal argument, a visualisation may be assembled and presented, wherein certain indexical elements within the image itself are *made visible* through the establishment of a professional vision (Goodwin, 1994) as an attempt to convince someone to see events in a particular way:

> *Forensics is not simply about science in the service of law or the police but is, much more broadly, about objects as they become evidence, things submitted for interpretation in an effort to persuade. The word is derived from the Latin* ***forensis****, which refers to the "forum" and the practice and skill of making an argument before a professional, political, or legal gathering. (Keenan, 2020, p. 285; Keenan & Weizman, 2012, p. 28)*

In many instances, authorities may control the visibilities of contested events both physically and discursively. However, embedded in the theoretical prism of visibilities is not only a hidden flipside of unwanted and suppressed *invisibilities* (from the transgressors' point of view) but also a productive discursive space for *counter-visibilities*, which according to Sekula (2014) refers to how the very conditions of visuality can be challenged and uncovered by undertaking a counter-mobilisation that follows the very same evidentiary logic as the one exercised by the state. Sekula (2014) calls these practices *counter-forensics*, which Keenan (2020) summarises as "nothing less than the adoption of forensic techniques as a practice of "political maneuvering," as a tactical operation in a collective struggle, a rogues' gallery to document the microphysics of barbarism" (p. 286). In other words, counter-forensics is simply adopting and modifying the same practices, tactics, and modes of inference that authorities may use against their citizens, against the authorities themselves: "Counter-forensics (...) produces evidence, documents individual and specific things, names names, and attaches names to bodies (...) as part of a political struggle—not because the images and the bones are self-evident but because they are not" (Keenan, 2020, p. 288). Smith and Watson (2023) argue that counter-forensics practices "give citizens an increased ability to bear witness to – and struggle against – forms of state violence and repression, often through a subversion of those same repressive regimes of visuality" (p. 55). Such a counter-mobilisation against the prevailing truth regimes of the state is in line with how investigative journalists have worked for years. Adopting the authorities' epistemological and methodological mindset, and then using government data to uncover transgressions perpetrated by the state, is not new in itself; this logic was also central when data journalism and investigative journalism were institutionalised with each other in the late 1980s (Anderson, 2018, p. 128). However, what sets this new emerging counter-mobilisation apart is that it puts the visual front and centre, facilitating a poly-perspectival form of truth-building, which Matthew Fuller and Eyal Weizmann (2021) have theorised as *investigative aesthetics*.

3.3.2 Investigative Aesthetics

In their extremely dense and expansive account of the emerging field of investigative aesthetics, Fuller and Weizman (2021) offer no short definition but rather a range of postulates that aim to demarcate what sets investigative aesthetics apart as a distinct form of knowledge production. Of course, it is difficult to say whether such a theoretical contribution has had any direct impact on the practical world of investigative journalism, but as I try to show in article two, Weizman's *Forensic Architecture* has at least indirectly affected the epistemological boundaries of investigative journalism in legacy newsrooms such as *The New York Times*, which in turn is, of course, a news outlet that is very influential in the journalistic field. In their book, Fuller and Weizman (2021) set out to redefine what is commonly meant by both 'investigations' and 'aesthetics' in order to bring these domains together in a new type of epistemic work that according to the authors "mixes journalistic, scientific, technological and artistic sensibilities to construct and assemble evidence about the world" (p. 29). In the theoretical framework they develop, to aestheticise something means simply to render it more attuned to sensing. In their account, aesthetics encompasses both *sensing* – the capacity to register and to be affected, and *sense-making* – the capacity for such sensing to become knowledge of some kind (p.

33). To explain what they mean by this, let me return to the video investigation of the alleged chemical attack perpetrated by the Syrian state mentioned in chapter one. When a Syrian army helicopter dropped a gas cylinder containing a chlorine payload on a multi-story residential apartment building in the suburbs of Douma, the cylinder left traces in bodies, the architectural structure, and the surrounding environment. Bystanders and rescue workers who happened to witness the explosion and its immediate aftermath filmed what they saw and uploaded their testimonies to social media. A few days later, a regime-friendly news crew from Russian state television documented the site of the explosion to debunk that the Syrian government was behind the attack. All these different human and non-human sensors recorded and were impacted by the bombing incident in different ways. Fuller and Weizman argue that locating these sensors and pulling them together in order to understand *what* they sensed and *how* they sensed demands sense-making: “So aesthetics is an approach that is fundamentally about assembling and finding the means to recognize, a multiplicity of different forms of sensation” (p. 35). Related to their understanding of aesthetics as a dual process of sensing and sensemaking is the concept of *hyper-aesthetics*, which they define as “an expanded and ramified aesthetic, in which both sensing and sense-making are intensified” (p. 57).[35] To *hyper-aestheticise* can essentially be three things: (1) to amplify the sensitivity of an entity to detect the environment around it, (2) to multiply the number of ways in which entities act as sensors, or (3) to generate and build assemblies that synthesise multiple sensations horizontally (pp. 57-69). If we are to bring this down from the abstract to the concrete and transpose it to the practical world of investigative journalism, we could say that (1) potential non-human and human sensors need to be either directed at something specific or questioned in light of a pre-defined task. Furthermore, (2) it is crucial to work with as many sensors as possible to both multiply the dimensions of sensing and to increase the level of sensory intensification. However, (3) to demonstrate the amplification and multiplicity of sensors, it is necessary to assemble new discursive representations that can display and interconnect a plethora of evidence at the same

[35] I use this concept in article two.

time. In other words, to *hyper-aestheticise* is to rework and heighten aesthetic sensorium (p. 108). Of course, in the current digital environment, the image becomes an important source for sensing in its own capacity as a testimony, and as a gateway into other forms and sources of potential evidence. New possibilities for sensing and sense-making aside, behind Fuller and Weizman's expansive vocabulary and lofty prose lies an epistemic logic that is actually very similar to the one detailed by Ettema and Glasser (1998). In my view, what distinguishes the emerging field of investigative aesthetics from more traditional investigative journalism is the expanded repertoire of potential evidentiary objects (which now includes both digital and material witnesses) (Dubberley et al., 2020; Schuppli, 2020) and, not least, how these objects are assembled and interconnected in evidentiary networks that facilitate an entirely new way to articulate knowledge claims (see article two). However, the epistemological principles underpinning the two types of knowledge work are not so different. Here Ettema and Glasser (1998) describe the constructive nature of the epistemology of investigative journalism: "The claims to know the truth about what happened cannot rest on a claim to have achieved a state of correspondence to reality but rather on a rigorous process of corroboration among accounts" (p. 152). The notion that the truth must be assembled is echoed by Fuller and Weizman (2021):

> *An investigation, like any perspectival operation, is* ***constructive*** *in that it shapes its relation to what it looks at, or what it understands by looking. It is* ***constitutive*** *because in making an investigation, in proposing new conditions of knowing, seeing and doing, it engenders the possibility of, or even makes, new consistencies of relation possible between these things and thus puts in play the capacity to experiment with reality formation more broadly. (p. 111)*

In other words, both investigative aesthetics and more traditional investigative journalism involve an active process of construction that relies on corroboration and cross-verification between different accounts, but investigative aesthetics is also constitutive in the sense that it discursively constructs new optical devices, and consequently, new phenomena to look at (Latour, 1986). Thus, in investigative aesthetics, the conditions of visuality originally controlled by either rogue actors or the state are challenged and contested, not just by a revelatory image but by the literal creation and mobilisation of new ways of seeing.

3.4 Summary Theoretical Perspectives

The relationship between the theoretical lenses of boundaries, epistemologies, and visibilities can be fleshed out by once again returning to *The New York Times'* video investigation of the chemical attack in Syria. As mentioned in the introduction, the video introduced new modes of both seeing and knowing to investigative journalism. Since then, the *Visual Investigations team's* open-source methodology has sparked extensive meta-coverage (Bauder, 2022; Darrach, 2020; Jolkovski, 2020; Klinnik & Prigent, 2021; Scanlan, 2019) and scholarly attention (Müller & Wiik, 2021). From a boundary theory perspective, the making and publication of the video investigation can be understood as *both* an act of demarcation and an act of collaboration. The investigation was a collaboration in the sense that two organisations located at the periphery of the journalistic field, *Bellingcat,* and *Forensic Architecture*, teamed up with perhaps the most famous legacy newsroom in the world. Looking at the end credits of the video, it was also a collaboration in the sense that the investigation brought together a wide range of actors from different social worlds and knowledge-producing fields, including journalists, architects, chemical weapon experts, and medical professionals. The knowledge coordination between these different groups was facilitated by the investigation itself, which through an intermeshing of different professional visions (Goodwin, 1994) was transformed into what is often referred to in science and technology studies as a 'boundary object' (Star & Griesemer, 1989):

> *Boundary objects are objects which are both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites. They are weakly structured in common use and become strongly structured in individual-site use. These objects may be abstract or concrete. (p. 393)*

This description fits well with the very concept of 'investigation', which undoubtedly has a commonsensical meaning that makes it identifiable across different knowledge fields while at the same time being filled with additional layers of meaning in each specific field.[36] However, more relevant to the theoretical argument I am attempting to put forward here is the notion that the video investigation can also be viewed as an example of boundary work in a more antagonistic sense. Directed outwards, the investigation can be understood as a rhetorical act of demarcation, more specifically a combination of the processes of *protection of autonomy* and *expulsion* (Gieryn, 1999). By intervening in an ongoing knowledge struggle concerning a highly contested event, the reporters of *the Visual Investigations team* exercise their self-proclaimed watchdog role and explicitly advocate for their epistemic authority. In putting forward their own evidence-based analysis of the event, they simultaneously draw an implicit line between independent truth-seeking journalism and the deceitful knowledge regimes of the Russian and Syrian states. The competing adversaries that are cast out of bounds are already introduced at the beginning of the video, which starts with Russian and Syrian officials denying that the event ever took place: "Where is your concrete evidence about what happened?" the Syrian President al-Assad smirkingly asks. The video then cuts to a bomb falling and exploding, whereupon Malachy Browne, the senior producer of *the Visual Investigations team* calmly responds: "The concrete evidence is right here [meaning in the video]". What makes the video investigation such an effective demonstration of journalistic truth-telling and thus also a marker of professional autonomy is by and large the assemblage of a series of counter-visibilities that in various ways unravel Syria and Russia's version of events. Moreover, in advocating for their epistemic authority, the reporters from *the Visual Investigation team* also *expel* their colleagues from Russian state television who by already having given a different account are ostracised as conveyers of propaganda by "broadcasting their own distorted version of events" (Browne, Koettl, et al., 2018). While these acts of boundary work are rather explicit and confrontational, there is simultaneously an internal and implicit *expansion* of epistemic practices happening. Essentially, by reconstructing a virtual model of the crime scene and studying the clues it contains through introducing several new *hyper-*

[36] See, for example, Martin Innes (2003) for how investigative work is understood by homicide detectives. There are many epistemological similarities with investigative reporting and his account.

aesthetics that in various ways amplify, multiply, and synthesise different forms of visual evidence, the video implicitly also *expands* what is both showable and knowable within the boundaries of the epistemology of investigative journalism, thus ultimately redefining what investigative journalism is.

4. Methodology

Why a qualitative approach? Why textual analysis? Why three different empirical sites? This chapter aims to introduce and discuss the project's research design, including its interpretive strategies and ontological and epistemological presuppositions. It is important to underscore that the final makeup of the methodology, as it is presented here, is the result of a laborious and explorative process that has been evolving for more than four years. [37]

4.1 Why a Qualitative Approach?

As stated in the introduction, this thesis adopts a qualitative approach to the study of investigative journalism. Qualitative approaches are best suited for answering exploratory and open-ended research questions that aim to develop new insights and theories (Flick, 2018). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018), "Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 43). A qualitative approach privileges understanding, interpretation, and reflexivity over causal explanations, predetermined procedures, and authoritative claims to truth (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). As a set of complex interpretive practices, qualitative research can mean different things in different scholarly disciplines. However, this thesis adheres to an understanding of qualitative research that follows Patrik Asper & Ugo Corte's (2019) definition. Based on a review of 89 textbooks and scientific articles that address the defining characteristics of qualitative research, they propose that qualitative work is fundamentally "an iterative process in which improved understanding to the scientific community is achieved by making new significant distinctions resulting from getting closer to the phenomenon studied" (p. 155). This definition complies well with the overarching aim of the thesis, the research questions it poses, and the methods it uses to answer these questions.

[37] Without going into detail, I find it simply necessary to note that this thesis would probably have been very different had the majority of the research process not been carried out from the home office in my attic during a global pandemic.

4.2 Why Qualitative Textual Analysis?

Concretely, this thesis attempts to get close to the visuality and epistemology of investigative journalism by studying various forms of texts, namely journalistic self-reports (article one) and two different kinds of news texts (articles two and three). The thesis thus understands the term ‘text’ in the broadest possible sense, meaning that all systems of signs, including both photographs and videos – are considered a form of textual output (Boréus & Bergström, 2017). There is no point in denying that the main rationale for choosing textual analysis over other methods such as in-depth interviews and newsroom ethnography initially arose from non-scientific concerns that became very pressing during the first phase of this project. To put it bluntly, the far-reaching and prolonged uncertainties sparked by the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic in the spring of 2020 forced me to drop the original plans of doing fieldwork and think alternatively to secure steady progress in the project. However, it is important to stress that the choice was not just born out of practical necessity alone. It was also motivated by the lack of content analysis on digital investigative journalism in the literature (see Wuergler et al., 2023) and the increasingly ‘epistemological’ direction the project was taking after the publication of the first article.

In media and journalism studies, the study of texts has a long and rich tradition that includes many different approaches (Franklin, 2008; Krippendorff & Bock, 2009). Some of these approaches are inspired by qualitative reading strategies derived from critical culture studies, while other approaches are developed within a quantitative post-positivist social science paradigm (Fürsich, 2009). This thesis draws inspiration from both camps by combining a systematic mapping of manifest content with a close examination and interpretation of recurring performative textual strategies that are interchangeably referred to as ‘(the display of) epistemic practices’, ‘discursive practices’, or ‘performative markers of authority’. The three studies conducted are first and foremost qualitative in their approach, but vigilant readers will notice that I also use a fair amount of quantification. It is important to emphasise that this is done without following the strict methodological principles of quantitative content analysis such as pre-defined coding schemes, intercoder-reliability, or probability calculations of representativeness (Krippendorff, 2018). In this thesis, quantification is mainly used *qualitatively* as an instrument of distinction-making to either map out the inner distributions of various units of analysis (all articles) or to find salient qualities across a selected dataset to secure the most representative entry points for in-depth analysis (articles one and three). Thus, the act of counting should not be misinterpreted as an attempt to generate generalising claims beyond the three specific contexts of inquiry. The thesis makes no such totalising assertions. Empirically, the scope is primarily episodic and thus much more modest. To explore the boundaries, epistemologies, and visibilities of investigative journalism in three different empirical situations, the thesis deploys three different types of qualitative textual analysis: a combination of thematic and narrative analysis in the first article, a sociology of knowledge-inspired visual discourse analysis in the second article, and a longitudinal multimodal analysis in the third. I will introduce each approach more in detail below, but first, let me present the thesis' interpretive strategies.

4.2.1 Textual Analysis and Interpretive Strategies

In qualitative textual analysis, the act of interpretation is at the centre. The thesis combines three overlapping interpretive strategies. The first is an *analyst-oriented strategy*, which stresses that every reader comes to a text with a certain hermeneutical point of departure that involves both pre-understandings and prejudices. The second is a *producer-oriented strategy* that seeks to focus on the text at its production level. The third is a *discourse-oriented strategy* in which texts are understood through their relationship with other texts and discursive fields, which is then related to a wider social reality (Boréus & Bergström, 2017, pp. 11-14; Flick, 2018). These three strategies are used interchangeably in all articles. The first strategy puts the question of reflexivity at the forefront of the interpretive process, reminding us that it is inevitable not to be informed by theories and conditioned by a particular social and historical outlook when analysing texts (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018). The second strategy is attentive to how texts are meant to be perceived by their creators. This involves having knowledge about different publication contexts, what kinds of communicative acts different texts may serve, and how organisational routines and professional ideologies may have affected their creation. Adopting a production-oriented strategy should not be confused with giving text creators the privilege to control what their utterances mean once they are released into the world. Rather, it entails analysing texts on their intended premises to arrive at interpretations that both text producers and other researchers will find reasonable and reliable. The third discourse-oriented strategy moves beyond the actual texts and relates linguistic practices to wider social practices and other institutional contexts (Boréus & Bergström, 2017, p. 14). However, this interpretative strategy needs to be exercised with caution. Critics have argued that textual analysts often run into problems when assumptions regarding ideology, deep structures of significance, and external factors are inferred from text analysis alone (Philo, 2007). At worst, such speculative inferences can lead to unfounded conclusions that can easily be refuted by the text producers themselves. The fallacy of deducing any production-related information from news texts is also highlighted by Reich (2006), who argues "that applying [textual analysis] to production research involves two unfounded assumptions: that news processes are encoded into the product and that researchers are able to decode them reliably" (p. 501). Here it is key to analytically distinguish between the actual production process and the retelling and discursive display of this process, which is the empirical focus of this thesis. In general, I have been careful to constrict my attention to the texts as texts and tried to refrain actively from speculations regarding how and why they have turned out the way they have. The few times I depart from this principle and discuss extra-textual factors, such as how claims are verified or how an image was taken, it is either because this information is derived directly from the text themselves (all articles) or because it exists in other published sources (i.e., a book in article three). Despite these important reservations, the thesis nevertheless retains its right to put forward its own theoretical arguments and empirically grounded interpretations. As Elfriede Fürsich (2009) puts it: "Textual analysis has to evaluate media content in its own right as a creative (and often collaboratively-produced) moment in the circuit of culture often beyond the intentions of the actual producers" (p. 244).

4.2.2 Article One: Thematic and Narrative Analysis

The first study of this thesis examines a type of metajournalistic text that in many ways mimics a scientific paper. The method reports submitted to the annual Norwegian competition in investigative journalism, SKUP, describe how journalistic investigations were conducted, which methods journalists have used, and why their work matters. Although textual analyses of contest entries have become common in journalism studies (e.g. Lanosga & Martin, 2018; Strømme, 2020; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013), the limitation of using self-reports derived from a competitive context must be stressed. First, being specifically chosen to represent the best work of a news organisation within a given year, the reports cannot be used indicatively as representations of ordinary day-to-day news production. Second, it would also be a mistake to believe that such texts give a one-to-one representation of the epistemic work they are describing. Instead, the reports must be understood as reconstructed narratives that highlight main achievements, omit dead ends, and gloss over missteps. However, when analysed specifically as self-representation and markers of professional identities, they can shed light on both inaccessible behind-the-scenes stories from investigations and social processes occurring in the competitive context of SKUP that would have otherwise been difficult to capture empirically. The first article uses a combination of thematic and narrative analysis to examine both these analytical dimensions (Bjerknes, 2022b, p. 7). Thematic analysis, sometimes also referred to as qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2012, 2014), involves breaking down, categorising, and describing the content of texts (Boréus & Bergström, 2017, p. 24). Specifically targeting the description of information gathering and verification procedures, this part of the analysis sought to map out what submitters considered the most important epistemic practices of their work. This mapping was then combined with a narrative analysis (Robertson, 2017) that was geared toward examining how the three processes of boundary work (Gieryn, 1999) played out in the ways contestants retold their investigations. While the methodological challenges of the first article were rather straightforward and possible to overcome with the right clarifications and reservations (see Bjerknes, 2022b, pp. 6-7), article two turned out to be much more difficult to resolve.

4.2.3 Article Two: Visual Discourse Analysis

The second study of this thesis examines how externally produced visuals are reconstructed into evidence in 14 video investigations made by *the Visual Investigations team* at *The New York Times*. Faced with this highly complex empirical material, numerous challenges presented themselves already at the start. As the project had now ventured fully in an 'epistemological direction', the first task became to find an analytical approach that could speak to this literature while also being applicable to visual media. After a long search, I discovered the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse analysis (SKAD) (Keller, 2011; Keller et al., 2018). Compared to critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2010; van Dijk, 1988) and discourse theory (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985), SKAD is a rather unknown approach to discourse analysis that has – as far as I can tell – not been used in journalism studies before. Drawing on some of the same theories that underpin the study of journalistic epistemologies (Berger & Luckmann, [1966]1991; Schutz, 1962), the research program of SKAD seemed fitting for the study's purpose as it focuses on "the ongoing conflictual definitions of situations and the performativity of involved discourses; what knowledge or moral claims they make, how do they account for factual evidence and aesthetic or moral evaluation" (Keller, 2018, p. 26). Taking inspiration from Foucault ([1972] 2002), discourses in SKAD are defined as "a regulated practice of statement formulation responding to some problem, urgency or need for action, including *knowing something*, defining a situation and *perpetrating or transforming a given order* as such problems for action" (Keller, 2018, p. 20). A central idea within SKAD is that discourses socially construct, communicate, legitimate, and objectify structures of meaning that have social consequences across different strata in society. SKAD is not a method per se; it is a methodological approach that needs to be modified according to specific research interests and theoretical conceptualisations. For this study, I therefore combined SKAD with Charles Goodwin's concept of *professional vision* (1994), which in turn draws on both Foucault (1971) and Latour's (1986) concept of *inscription device*. In the analysis, I follow some of the same procedural steps I employed in article one; mainly a systematic and quantified mapping of manifest content, in this case pertaining to the kinds of visual artefacts used and how many times they were deployed in the videos' narrative structure. This was then combined with iterative readings of each video to synthesise the most prevalent discursive practices, including coding schemes, synchronisation, juxtaposition, inscriptions, and highlighting techniques across the dataset. Even though I managed to get this study published in a well-regarded journal, I still have mixed feelings about its methodology. The main issue – as I see it today – is that there are perhaps too many different theories and concepts at work at the same time. However, as I try to argue in the method section and in the concluding discussion, the theoretical promiscuity is primarily a result of a battle fought on two fronts. On the one hand, the article works diligently to avoid *visual essentialism*, a term coined by Mieke Bal to describe situations where visual modes of knowing are given primacy and isolated from their context. Bal's (2003) point is that visuals are neither superior nor subordinate to other modalities and should therefore be studied in tandem with other co-existing meaning-making systems. Hence, an important part of studying the image in context is therefore integrating that context as part of the actual analysis. In my view, the sociology of the epistemology paradigm can provide a useful avenue for this. Admittingly, there is always the risk of committing theoretical anarchy when combining too many perspectives, but it could conversely be argued that complex, and novel empirical material – which is at the centre of the close reading I am undertaking here, demands a customised and multifaceted apparatus of analysis to penetrate the complexities of emerging journalistic meaning-making.

4.2.4 Article Three: Longitudinal Multimodal Content Analysis

The third and last study of the thesis examines how the Norwegian newspaper VG uses images as epistemological statements in their coverage of one of Norway's most infamous unsolved crimes in recent years. The analysis employed in this study is informed by perspectives from social semiotics (Caple, 2013; Kress, 2010; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020) combined with Barbie Zelizer's (2010) notion of the "'subjunctive voice' of the visual" and Kathryn Claire Higgins's (2022) concept of "five different ways of looking at crime events". For this article, the methodological conundrum was figuring out whether these different perspectives could be combined and incorporated into a longitudinal research design that made it possible to track how depictions of persons and places shifted as the case evolved over a period of three years. The coverage of VG was chosen as an object of analysis because it relied heavily on the use of self-produced visuals and clearly contained traces of both independent investigative reporting and more traditional crime reporting that seemed to depend more on police sources. Empirically speaking, this was interesting because it muddled the theoretical distinction between investigative journalism and daily journalism so often referenced in the literature (Ettema & Glasser, 1998). However, most importantly, the case was – and still is – unsolved, which would prompt a different way to use the visual as a source of knowledge construction than what was the case in article two. Again, there is much going on in terms of theory combinations, and the analysis may be criticised for being overly descriptive – in fact, it has. Nevertheless, the whole point of this article is to demonstrate analytically that there is an intricate relationship between visual modes of knowing and the presentational circumstances of the image (Sekula, [1974] 1984). Therefore, describing the different layers of the surrounding contexts in detail, including the shifting epistemic conditions of the case, is essential for understanding how the visual can be used performatively to mitigate uncertainty and signal journalistic authority.

In hindsight, I see that methodological concerns can be raised against all three articles on different fronts, most notably regarding operationalisations, sampling strategies, and the level of abstraction in the analyses. However, since each study tries to address these pressing concerns in their respective method sections, I will leave it at that at this juncture and instead devote the remainder of the chapter to clarifying my meta-theoretical stance, which is a necessity in the study of journalistic epistemologies.

4.3 Ontological and Epistemological Presuppositions

An underlying premise in this thesis and the entire research agenda of the study of journalistic epistemologies is the view that journalism is a socially produced professional field with institutionalised practices, roles, beliefs, and values (Ward, 2018). Still, pledging allegiance to social constructionism as a metatheoretical stance seems to be far from the obvious choice. Instead, scholars have suggested social epistemology (Godler et al., 2020) and critical realism (Ekström & Westlund, 2019b; Wright, 2011) as more viable meta-theories for the study of journalistic epistemologies, often using the shortcomings of social constructionism and its alleged forms of anti-realism and radical relativism as justifications for their proposed alternatives. This subsection should not be viewed as an antagonistic counterargument in this discussion. Without attacking any other approaches, I simply want to reclaim and nuance what it entails to occupy a moderate metatheoretical social constructionist stance. [38]

4.3.1 Social Constructionism as a Metatheory

As noted by Darin Weinberg (2009): "Few terms in social theory ignite controversy like the term social constructionism [henceforth SC]" (p. 281).[39] SC as a metatheory emerged in opposition to positivism and empiricism and became known in the scientific community by challenging common perceptions about knowledge, truth, and reality (Romaioli & McNamee, 2021, p. 317). Weinberg (2009) argues that the contentious circumstances surrounding the popularisation of SC as a philosophical stance during the so-called science wars can explain some of the misconceptions that seem to plague the approach to this day. [40] Rejecting the notion that SC is a post-modern invention, Weinberg traces the intellectual roots of SC back to the classical theories of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber through early German sociology of knowledge, American pragmatism, ethnomethodology and more recently the

[38] The following two subsections contain reworked passages from a course paper I wrote last year that dealt with the difference between social constructionism and critical realism as meta-theoretical stances in the study of journalistic epistemologies (Bjerknes, 2022c). To avoid self-plagiarism, I sometimes therefore quote myself. This is admittingly odd but a necessity, nonetheless.

[39] Although I am mainly speaking of journalism studies as belonging to the social sciences in this section, it is probably more accurate to say that it sits at the nexus *between* social sciences and cultural studies (Zelizer, 2004b).

[40] "The science wars were especially tumultuous in journalism studies as the SC approach came under attack from two fronts (Zelizer, 2004a). In addition to the usual in-fighting with realists who were skeptical of post-modernism and especially French theory, journalists – accused by SC scholars of being naïve empiricists – were also pushing back on what they felt was condescending criticism (Groot Kormelink and Costera Mejer, 2015)" (this is a footnote also in Bjerknes, 2022c).

sociology of scientific knowledge (SSK). Based on this genealogy, Weinberg asserts that it is difficult to define SC as one coherent school of thought, but more importantly, he argues that "(…) a commitment to some form of SC is an indispensable feature of all social scientific research" (p. 281):

> *It is only if they are socially constructed that things might be amenable to sociological analysis. Hence the question we should be asking is not the categorical one: Are we or are we not constructionists? It is one of degree (...). (p. 281)*

This notion is echoed by Alvesson and Sköldberg (2018, p. 42) who, drawing on Barlebo Wenneberg (2001), claim that there are four types of approaches to SC in the social sciences. These are SC as (1) a critical perspective, (2) a sociological theory, (3) a theory of knowledge, and (4) a theory of reality. These four types constitute a continuum of radicality where the two first types are considered conservative and uncontroversial and pretty much baked into the DNA of the social sciences, which according to Andrew Sayer (2010, pp. 27-28) is inherently based on a critical, explanatory, and interpretive stance towards its object (society), which in itself include concepts and meanings that are recognised as both socially defined and socially produced. Thus, most social scientists would by default rally behind the first two types of SC. The problems tend to arise with the moderate (third) and radical (fourth) types, which are more all-encompassing and controversial variants that usually require deliberate and active positioning. According to Alvesson and Sköldberg (2018, p. 43), the moderate third is the epistemological stance, where knowledge is maintained to be socially constructed, while the radical fourth is the ontological approach that advocates that reality itself is a social construction. SC as a metatheory tends to oscillate (often vaguely) between these two last positions, oftentimes causing confusion and anger with outsider critics (Bjerknes, 2022c).

4.3.2 Critical Takes on Social Constructionism

Essentially, there are two arguments raised against SC as a viable metatheory in the study of journalistic epistemologies. The first argument pertains to the alleged lack of attention paid to ontology in SC. This line of criticism is perhaps most fiercely argued by Raymond Lau (2004, 2012), who in several polemic pieces accuses the first generation of SC scholars (e.g. Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Molotch & Lester, 1974; Tuchman, 1978) of committing "ontological gerrymandering" (Woolgar & Pawluch, 1985) by reducing news solely to a product of journalistic routine practices. Rejecting SC as inconsistent and self-defeating, Lau suggests critical realism (Bhaskar, [1975] 2008) as a metatheoretical stance to better theorise the relationship between reality and news-making. The second argument raised against SC also takes its starting point at the notion that SC reduces ontology to epistemology (Gauthier, 2005). According to this view, the tendency to bracket away extra-mental and extra-human determinants of knowledge within SC spawns a related problem which deprives SC scholars (such as Ettema & Glasser, 1985; Parasie, 2015) of an important opportunity to *evaluate* and *improve* journalistic knowledge (Godler et al., 2020). As a relevant side note to this criticism, it is important to keep in mind that studying journalistic epistemologies from a sociological vantage point entails doing what Anthony Giddens (1984, p. 284) calls "double hermeneutics". According to Danermark et al. (2019, p. 30), this means that the task of the researcher "is to interpret other people's interpretations, since other people's understandings and actions are an inseparable part of the object of study". [41] As I have noted previously in my coursework, this double layer of interpretation creates conceptual, spatial, and temporal distance between the researcher, the object of study and the reality of events. This problem

> *is complicated even further by the fact that journalistic interpretations [of reality] in turn are usually based on their sources' interpretations [of reality], thus adding another epistemic layer that must be considered. I can only speak for myself in this regard, but I think the reluctance to evaluate the quality of journalists' truth claims has more to do with the epistemological distance between the reality of events and the empirical material one is working with (in my case texts), than any adherence to anti-realism or what Godler et al. (2020, p. 214) calls "agnosticism about objective facts". (Bjerknes, 2022c, p. 9)*

[41] Giddens (1984) notes further that "the concepts that sociological observers invent are 'second-order' concepts in so far as they presume certain conceptual capabilities on the part of the actors to whose conduct they refer. But it is in the nature of social science that these can become 'first-order' concepts by being appropriated within social life itself" (p. 284). Schutz (1962) makes a similar distinction between first-degree constructions and second-degree constructions: "the constructs of social sciences are (…) constructs of the second degree, that is, constructs of constructs made by actors on the social scene" (p. 59).

It is clear from the literature that some of the harshest criticism raised against the SC approach is founded upon a certain kind of unwilling and ruthless reading that aims to stretch constructionists' arguments to the breaking point. What these attacks have in common is that they either explicitly or implicitly paint SC as a defensive, relativistic, and self-contradictory form of anti-realism that deprives the researcher of an important analytical dimension by focusing solely on the social construction of facts or the discursive mediation of reality. The notion that knowledge generation and knowledge quality hinge on nothing but social agreement alone, together with the claim that SC denies the existence of a mind-independent material reality, are according to Kenneth Gergen (2015) two deep-seated misunderstandings associated with the SC as a metatheoretical approach. First, a moderate constructionist theory of knowledge does not maintain that one form of knowledge is as good as another, but rather "that the validity of a specific form of knowledge should be assessed based on the pragmatic consequences to which its application leads in a specific domain" (Romaioli & McNamee, 2021, p. 326). In other words, there is nothing inherent in SC as a metatheoretical approach that denies the researcher the opportunity to evaluate knowledge. Second and relatedly, SC does not question the existence of an extra-human reality. The approach simply pays less attention to the analytical level of ontology because SC "questions the possibility that we can report directly on it and find problematic the idea that reality is somehow reflected in our talk and other symbolic systems" (Burr, 2015, p. 118). As an epistemological metatheory, then, SC sees both knowledge and knowledge-making as fallible, theory-mediated, historical, culturally specific, and sustained by social processes and language. "Language, to the constructionist, entails all embodied activity, meaning that it is more than words or text: it is action" (Romaioli & McNamee, 2021, p. 323). In other words, "it is the unfolding processes of human interaction and meaning-making in contexts that are the central focus of social constructionist research" (Bjerknes, 2022c, p. 5).

4.3.3 Textual Analysis and Social Constructionism

Thus, the combination of textual analysis as a methodological approach and social constructionism as a philosophical stance is not unusual. In fact, all the analytical approaches used in this thesis build explicitly on social constructionist ideas. Both thematic and narrative analysis, which are used in article one, work from the assumption that texts are instrumental to the production of social reality (Fürsich, 2009) and that narratives function as a fundamental interpretive frame that helps people organise their experiences by making the world comprehensible (Robertson, 2017, p. 123). The SKAD approach used in article two holds a similar view:

> *In discourse, the use of language and symbols by social actors constitutes the sociocultural facticity of physical and social realities. The meaning of signs, symbols, images, gestures, actions or things is more or less fixed in socially, spatially, and temporally or historically situated orders of signs. (Keller, 2011, p. 51)*

The importance of intersubjectivity and social institutionalisation for truth-building is also embedded in the social semiotic approach taken in article three:

> *A social semiotic theory of truth does not claim to establish the truth or untruth of representations. It can only show whether a given representation of some aspect of reality, visual, verbal or otherwise, is represented as true or not. From the point of view of social semiotics, truth is a construct of semiosis, and as such the truth of a particular social group arises from the values and beliefs of that group. (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020, p. 150)*

However – and this is crucial – even though all the analytical approaches used in this thesis question the notion that there can be *one* universal mirror version of reality or *one* Truth, they do not claim that there is *no* reality or *no* truth, but rather "that there are multiple realities and multiple truths and that they must be considered in context" (Romaioli & McNamee, 2021, p. 327). To be perfectly clear, the thesis does not challenge the fact that the events investigative journalists cover are real-life occurrences happening in the ontological domain. Homicides, state violence, and government corruption are of course *real* in the gravest possible sense with often far-reaching consequences for the actors involved. However, the argument from a moderate social constructionist perspective is merely that these events only can be rendered intelligible through social action in discursive fields. As noted by Ettema and Glasser (1998): "Knowing and telling the truth is ultimately under the control of the values that reporters share with their communities" (p. 152). Of course, the same principle of conditioned embeddedness pertains to the knowledge production of scholarly communities as well, including my own. Again, Darin Weinberg (2009) provides some clarification:

> *This is not to argue, as some social constructionists have in the past, that ontology ought to be reduced to epistemology. Rather, it is to argue that neither our various ontologies nor our various epistemologies should be divorced from the historically and culturally situated social practices in which they arise, develop, and are given meaning and value. (p. 292)*

Thus, according to a moderate social constructionist theory of knowledge, 'facts' are contingent and concept-dependent and placed within systems of meaning that are inter-subjectively understood through social coordination and negotiation. Zooming in on the textual output of these collective processes of knowledge production and meaning-making, and thus indirectly placing ontology beyond the scope of the analysis, should not be seen as implicitly advocating for relativism or anti-realism; it is rather a question of being reflexive and honest about the limitations of what can be known and what can be evaluated from a strictly textual analytical approach.

5. Findings and Discussions

In this chapter, I present the main findings from the three empirical articles and discuss how they relate to the overarching research question, which was: *How is investigative journalism distinguishable from other forms of journalism, and how is visual evidence used to make knowledge claims in investigative journalism?*

5.1 Article One: Inventive Factfinders

Article one aims to cover the first part of the overarching research question by examining what Norwegian practitioners in the field consider to be "investigative methods". The point of departure for this study was simply the observation that the demarcation of investigative journalism as something unique often starts with focusing on what investigative reporters do (De Burgh, 2008; Protess et al., 1991). Of course, knowing that there is a big difference between saying and actual doing, I would have also liked in a more ideal world to be able to observe the latter. Nonetheless, the competitive context of SKUP provides a special kind of "forced situation" that accentuates both the normative and transformative dynamics of investigative journalism in a way that would have been difficult to empirically capture, for example, in one single isolated ethnographic study. Based on 44 method reports submitted to the competition in 2018 authored by 110 journalists from 18 different news outlets, the study finds that stakeholder conceptions of investigative journalism are varied and expansive regarding information-gathering procedures yet narrow and conservative regarding verification practices. An important attribute assigned to investigative journalism that clearly serves as a distinct boundary marker in the context of SKUP is the reluctance to rely on singularity when it comes to sources, methods, and evidence. Naturally, both the number of sources and composite of methods combinations vary according to the nature of the project, but generally, there is always some degree of multiplicity involved. Furthermore, the study finds that the process of *expansion* (Gieryn, 1999) is by and large related to information-gathering procedures, while there is mostly boundary maintenance of cross-verification as the gold standard of procedural justification. It is worth noting that submitters generally devote much more attention to describing information-gathering procedures than verification practices. One possible explanation for this may be that many journalists seem to lack the reflexivity necessary to articulate exactly how they distinguish verification and justification (Ettema & Glasser, 1998, p. 161). Another reason could be that many submitters seem to have a very instrumental and tool-oriented understanding of the investigative method, devoting most of their reports to describing the technicalities and minutiae of the research process without necessarily explicitly justifying why it holds up. Given that SKUP favours novelty as one of its competition criteria, there is naturally an emphasis among many submitters on technology and computerised methods. Still, it is essential to note that requesting and reading public documents and interviewing sources were the most used and discussed information-gathering procedures in the contest in 2018. In fact, while traditional and computerised methods are seen, by many newcomers to the competition, as opposing entities with conflicting attributes (Gieryn, 1983) that seem to have a hard time co-existing in the context of SKUP, there are simultaneously, especially among recurring and experienced submitters – including the winner of 2018 – an enunciated awareness that it is exactly the *combination* of traditional and emerging ways of knowing that defines 'good' investigative journalism in the context of SKUP:

> *The ability to master and alternate between traditional and innovative methods functions as a key boundary marker at SKUP in 2018, setting apart those possessing both specialized knowledge and the experience to know when and how to deploy the spectrum of epistemic practices they have at their disposal. It is the versatile inventive factfinder, with one foot firmly rooted in the history and tradition of investigative reporting, and the other immersed in cutting-edge technology, that emerges as the dominant identity position in these reports. (Bjerknes, 2022b, p. 12)*

The negotiation of emerging epistemic practices documented in this study suggests that the implementation of new technologies is done without necessarily changing the fundamental epistemological principles of investigative journalism. This is in line with previous studies that have shown that technology seldom completely overwrites existing journalistic core practices (Karlsen & Stavelin, 2014; Parasie, 2015; Tandoc & Oh, 2017). Aside from adding evidence to this notion, the article advances the research literature on investigative journalism in the following two ways. First, by introducing boundary work theory as a theoretical prism to the study of change in investigative journalism, the article carves out a research position that attempts to bypass normative internalist accounts of what makes investigative reporting distinctively different from other forms of reporting. This analytical move not only gives a possible path out of the fog of reverence that seems to surround investigative journalism as a scientific object in existing scholarship (Bromley, 2005, 2008), but also counteracts the fallacy of considering journalism as one harmonious and uniform professional field that always collectivises its boundary disputes towards external actors (Carlson, 2016, p. 356). Second, by conceptualising the epistemology of investigative journalism (Ettema & Glasser, 1985) as an object of ongoing negotiations, the study also empirically demonstrates how epistemic practices from other knowledge-producing fields, most notably the social sciences and computer programming, are being adopted, adjusted, and utilised by investigative reporters. At the forefront of these expansive transformations – at least in Norway, are the wealthiest and biggest legacy outlets, which due to their financial resources and diversity of manpower are able to seize new problems and conduct ground-breaking investigations again and again. Winning SKUP not only makes these news outlets and their investigative reporters revered by their colleagues, but it also gives them great definitional control over the boundaries of investigative journalism and ultimately a strong voice in what good journalism fundamentally should be.

5.2 Article Two: Images of Transgressions

Article two of this thesis aims to target the second part of the overarching research question by exploring how collected images and videos are used to make knowledge claims in 14 video investigations produced by *the Visual Investigations team* at *The New York Times*. Drawing on Charles Goodwin's (1994) concept of *professional vision*, the article identifies a range of co-existing discursive practices, including narrativisation, coding schemes, synchronisation, juxtaposition, inscriptions, and highlighting techniques that together constitute what the article coins as an "investigative way of seeing" events. Furthermore, the analysis reveals that many of the discursive practices for mobilising the visual as evidence are essentially remediations of institutionalised performative evidentiary tropes found in more verbal-based forms of investigative journalism. The juxtaposition of collaborative accounts, on-screen verification of claims, and the rhetorical display of the totality of evidence undergirding the reporting are all familiar discursive strategies for justifying knowledge claims as true in investigative news texts (Broersma, 2011; Wuergler et al., 2023). However, the analysis also finds some entirely new ways of articulating knowledge claims in the work of *the Visual Investigations team*. Across the sample of 14 videos, the study identifies a recurring multimodal statement pattern that is theorised using Bruno Latour's (1986) concept of *inscription device*, which in this context:

> *(…) discursively construct[s] an optical device that synthesizes multiple forms of evidence, putting the viewer above and at the scene at the same time. By combining the act of both "being there" and witnessing from afar, a form of hyper-aesthetics arises with an inherent "interlinkedness" that mutates and becomes reflexive. (Bjerknes, 2022a, p. 964)*

This way of amplifying, multiplying, and synthesising visual evidence through the assembling of new counter-visibilities takes its inspiration from the emerging field of investigative aesthetics (Fuller & Weizman, 2021, p. 57). Two years after the collaboration with *Forensic Architecture*, it is interesting to note that *the Visual Investigation team* in 2020 is showcasing a plethora of self-made hyper-aesthetics such as split screens (Browne & Engelbrecht, 2020), quad screens (Browne & Xiao, 2020), and immersive architectural reconstructions of crime scenes (Browne, Singhvi, et al., 2020), which all – albeit in different ways – both render and expand reality. However, none of these emerging visualisation techniques seem to disrupt the core epistemological principles of investigative journalism but rather build on and remediate already institutionalised evidentiary practices thus echoing one of the main insights from article one. Again, it seems that technology is more attuned to epistemology than the other way around. Another common finding between the 14 video investigations undertaken by *The New York Times* in 2020, and the 44

Norwegian investigative projects from 2018, is the pragmatic mixing of open and secret sources and the combination of both computerised methods and shoe-leather reporting. Although the reporters from *the Visual Investigation team* identify primarily as open source investigators (Browne, Willis, et al., 2020) and are portrayed in the literature as tech-savvy "digital sleuths" (McMahon, 2021), it should be noted that their work is not solely based on open digital sources. Several of the videos in the 2020 batch also contain elements of traditional investigative reporting techniques such as on-location interviews with witnesses, document leaks, and claims from anonymous sources. Taken together, the findings from the first two studies point toward an empirical reality that both confirms and contradicts the normative definitions of investigative journalism. On the one hand, the findings indicate that the cross-verification of multiple forms of evidence is a key boundary marker that sets investigative journalism epistemologically apart from other types of journalism. This attribute seems consistent regardless of context, presentational modes, news outlets, and topics of coverage. On the other hand, the findings from the first two studies also indicate a more complicated and murkier reality when it comes to asymmetrical and sometimes secretive source relationships, unverifiable knowledge claims, and the moral ambivalence of actors' guilt and innocence. In fact, these grey zones seem to occasionally turn up even in the most straightforward and seemingly rock-solid investigations where journalists have identified the transgressors and know a considerable amount about the concrete unfolding of events (Ettema & Glasser, 1998, p. 164), thus begging the question: what happens when almost nothing is certain?

5.3 Article Three: Visualising a Murder Mystery

While the two first articles of this thesis examine empirical material that most stakeholders and academics would agree can be characterised as fulfilling many of the defining criteria of investigative journalism, the third article studies a fringe case. The so-called "Lørenskog-disappearance" is one of the most covered unsolved criminal cases in recent Norwegian history with more than 10,000 unique news postings (Nematpoor et al., 2022). The case started on the morning of the 31st of

October 2018 when Anne-Elisabeth Hagen (68) mysteriously disappeared from her home in Lørenskog, Norway. A few hours later her billionaire husband found a ransom letter demanding nine million euros in cryptocurrency for her safe return. After much back and forth with the alleged kidnappers and still no proof of life, the husband was suddenly arrested in April 2020 on suspicion of orchestrating the murder of his wife. As of now, the case remains unsolved, with the husband still facing charges, and Anne-Elisabeth Hagen still gone. What sets the coverage of the "Lørenskog-disappearance" apart from many of the journalistic investigations examined in the two previous studies is primarily the dual role of the police. While law enforcement was regularly the main transgressor and thus the target of the investigation in the 2020 work of *the Visual Investigation team*, the police serve as both a source of information and a possible target for critical journalistic scrutiny in VG's coverage. A central premise in the study is that investigative crime reporters must consider dual interests in cases like the "Lørenskog-disappearance". On the one hand, they want to find out as much as possible about the alleged criminal act because there is an obvious public demand for information. However, to do so, they are beholden to the police who are positioned epistemologically closer to the crime event. On the other hand, reporters also want to exercise their self-proclaimed watchdog role and monitor the ongoing criminal investigation so that the police do not commit an act of wrongdoing by framing the wrong guy. According to previous landmark studies in the crime/media nexus (Chibnall, 1977; Ericson et al., 1989; Hall et al., 1978), these dual considerations put crime reporters in a delicate epistemological position that can sometimes be difficult to navigate. It is against this shifting and conflicting backdrop that the epistemic role of the visual is being analysed in this study. By deploying a multimodal longitudinal content analysis on 310 news stories published by the Norwegian newspaper VG over a period of three years, the article maps out the visual inventory of the case and tracks how the visibilities of the main actors and the crime scene are affected by new information coming to light as the case evolves. The article's main contribution to the extant literature, and the overall aim of the research project, lies in its detailed examination of how verbally articulated uncertainties tend to unravel in what Barbie Zelizer (2010) calls the "subjunctive voice of the visual". When the presentational circumstances (Sekula, [1974] 1984) are rife with conflicting and contradictory statements, the study demonstrates that images may function as infrastructures of inferences that can enable imaginative work and prompt readers to engage in speculative thinking. This is particularly evident in the depictions of the husband who after his arrest in the spring of 2020 is visualised in an increasingly criminalising manner. Drawing on Kathryne C. Higgins' (2022) concept of "five ways of looking at crime events", the analysis argues that the stake-out photographs of the husband immerse the viewer in the criminal investigation through what Higgins calls "embodied looking" (p. 9):

> *(…) epistemologically, we are positioned inside an ongoing and developing crime event from which we can clandestinely inspect its main suspect without him seeing us back. Taken together, I would argue that these photojournalistic images embody* ***investigativeness*** *as their denotative power lies in their objective simplicity while their aesthetic appeal works on a more subtle connotative level, nodding in the direction of crosshairs and stakeout tactics that involve patience and precision. (Bjerknes, 2023, p. 18)*

Accordingly, the study finds that much of the 'investigative performativity' (Broersma, 2011; Wuergler & Dubied, 2023) of the coverage is actually found in the visual mode. VG seems to go to great lengths to produce their own photographs of the crime scene, ongoing police operations, and not least, the main suspect. Taken together, these 409 unique self-produced photographs demonstrate a pro-longed on-site presence and multileveled overview of the case that serves as performative arguments for why VG's reporting should be deemed trustworthy. In addition to devoting substantial resources to traversing the "embodied gatekeeping" (Bock, 2021, p. 16) of the police to secure exclusive photographs that are used to signal journalistic authority, it is evident from the coverage that the crime reporters from VG also carry out a number of independent investigatory steps that entails both a gathering and verification of information. These steps include interviews with neighbours, friends, and family, surveillance of the husband, financial and social background checks of the actors involved, and a systematic mapping of all cars and movements in the neighbourhood on the day of the disappearance in which witness accounts and DMV records are cross-referenced. Last but not least, the newspaper also devotes substantial time and resources to investigating the so-called crypto rig that the alleged kidnappers use to communicate with the Hagen family. Due to limitations of the article format, all these interesting details are unfortunately just treated superficially in the study, but I would like to use this opportunity to underscore that there are many examples of VG conducting investigative epistemic work in the coverage. However, when it comes to claims regarding the actual unfolding of the criminal act and the alleged role of the husband, it seems like VG is more at the mercy of the police. Generally, there are many conflicting, and incriminating knowledge claims in the 310 news stories that are either put forward anonymously or outsourced to law enforcement, thus making it difficult to discern one coherent epistemological strategy across the coverage. Should we nevertheless attempt to characterise the overall justificatory context of the "Lørenskog-disappearance" as it is presented in VG over three years, one could say that in this particular case, the normative boundaries between independent investigative journalism and more docile forms of crime reporting at times tend to collapse into each other. While there are many empirical examples of both cross-verification and performative demonstrations of evidence, the reporters seem also to outsource epistemic responsibility and rely heavily on pre-justified knowledge claims from the police when all other paths to self-acquired evidence and verification are exhausted. This finding supplements other studies that have examined the thresholds for verification among daily reporters (Godler & Reich, 2017). Faced with unsolvable uncertainty, it seems that even experienced investigative crime reporters are occasionally forced to accept knowledge claims at face value.

5.4 Summarising Discussion

Based on the findings from the three empirical studies, it can be concluded that the relationship between the term 'investigative journalism' and its associated social practice is reciprocally constitutive and intrinsically linked to its temporal, technological, epistemological, cultural, and political surroundings as well as the social and symbolic interests involved in its discursive and performative mobilisation.

Investigative journalism is not a neutral term with a set of fixed intrinsic properties; it is a boundary marker that informs and regulates journalistic practice by conditioning both truth-seeking and truth-telling. A timely objection to this line of reasoning would be that none of the three empirical situations described above really showcase explicit demarcation processes in the classical sense and that the thesis stretches the boundary work concept too far. Where is the significant *other* that these alleged acts of boundary work are directed against? Where are the insider-outsider narratives? How can boundaries be drawn out of thin air without a clearly defined social entity or explicitly stated criteria of quality? In short, why bother about boundaries and distinctions if they only are implicit and need to be 'made visible' through the concepts and analytical labour of an outside researcher? On one level, these are valid questions to ask, but this line of criticism underestimates the implicit effects of boundary work and the profound impact award-winning and high-profile news stories have on journalistic practice (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013, p. 134). Case in point, while visual investigations were not mentioned at all at SKUP in 2018, the methodology of *Bellingcat* and the *Visual Forensic team* at *The Washington Post*[42] are heralded as direct sources of inspiration in method reports submitted to the competition in the last two years (Furuly et al., 2022; Wictorsen et al., 2021). Although full-blown visual investigations have yet to emerge in a Norwegian context, this nevertheless suggests that Norwegian legacy outlets are slowly adopting new ways of knowing by attending workshops and studying the work of their international colleagues. This means that internal boundary work does not have to be antagonistic or explicit to have an effect in knowledge-producing fields. In fact, implicit demarcations of expansions can be equally impactful and formative among stakeholders if they are carried out by example (Barnes et al., 1996, p. 155). Thus – in a way that is similar to advancements in science – it seems that the most influential agents in the contemporary professional world of investigative journalism are those conducting innovative expansions of epistemic practices simply through practical high-quality work.

[42] *The Visual Forensic team* at *The Washington Post* was established in 2020 (The Washington Post, 2020)

6. Conclusions

Based on the perspectives accounted for in this framing introduction and the insights generated from the three empirical studies, two main insights can be fleshed out. First, it is clear that normative stakeholder definitions of investigative journalism seldom hold up when compared empirically against conditions on the ground. Investigative journalism is not always self-initiated, morally engaged, sceptical of authoritative sources, or epistemologically bulletproof. Second, it is also evident that the epistemological boundaries of investigative journalism are in motion and that some of the greatest amalgamations between emerging and established ways of knowing are happening in the border area between investigative journalism, data journalism, and counter-forensic practices. However, instead of attempting to redefine a set of fixed criteria to operationalise and update what makes investigative journalism in the digital age "an extraordinary enterprise, a special confluence of time, talent, and resources" (Ettema & Glasser, 1985, p. 4), I want to circle back to Thomas Gieryn's (1983, 1999) work on demarcations in the history of science and use his ideas to reflect upon some of the internal and external conditions that seem to determine the boundaries of investigative journalism as they emerge in this thesis. As a fervent anti-essentialist, one of Gieryn's main arguments is that science never can be reduced to a set of fixed properties: "(…) [the] selection of one or another description depends on which characteristics best achieve the demarcation in a way that justifies scientists' claims to authority or resources" (1983, p. 792). Similarly, the attributes assigned to investigative journalism when reporters make a case for their epistemic authority seem to be equally malleable and context dependent. This understanding is in line with Cancela et al. (2021), who argue that investigative journalism can be understood as "a shared set of values and practices by a given group of practitioners in a given context" (p. 5). In the competitive setting of SKUP, investigative journalism is construed by many submitters as technological, data-driven, and impactful. In the work of *the Visual Investigation team*, investigative journalism is construed mainly as visual, global, and based on open sources. In VG's coverage of the "Lørenskog disappearance", the boundaries of investigative journalism are more implicitly and ambiguously drawn as reporters in this specific case act interchangeably as bearers of allegations from the police while simultaneously acting as self-proclaimed watchdogs tasked with monitoring the criminal investigation on behalf of the public. Despite these different and, some would say, conflicting attributes, the thesis finds that the most invoked boundary marker that seems to emerge across different contexts in which investigative reporters are vying for jurisdictional control relates to their epistemology. Echoing previous research (Ettema & Glasser, 1998), the thesis finds that investigative journalism is therefore first and foremost empirically distinguishable from other types of journalism in the ways reporters articulate and justify their knowledge claims. Investigative journalism entails independent fact-finding and analysis of information by using a multiplicity of sources, methods, and forms of evidence. Knowledge claims are subjected to verification or other elaborate justification processes and assembled into effective stories for publication. However, the extent to which these institutionalised epistemological principles are followed depends on the contextual circumstances of each individual news story. Taken together, this suggests that investigative journalism as a demarcated and purified form of journalistic knowledge work is a non-existent normative construction that stakeholders use to fixate a range of social practices that are constantly under social negotiation. Paying attention to how the boundaries of investigative journalism are discursively erected, maintained, and expanded, and which actors have the greatest definitional power in these negotiations, are crucial for understanding change in investigative journalism and how investigative reporting comes to be recognised as the ultimate journalistic enterprise (Ettema & Glasser, 1998; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2021; Protess et al., 1991; Schudson, 2008). From a research perspective, instead of reproducing the normative exaltation of investigative reporting as simply “the best journalism” (Ettema & Glasser, 1985, p. 4), it can be more accurate and productive to speak about degrees of investigative attributes in news texts, epistemic practices, and visualisation techniques. It follows from this that some news stories can be more investigative than others and that “degrees of investigation” can be performatively signalled and argued for in many ways. This variation can be observed when comparing how the image is used as a source for knowledge construction in the works of NYT and VG. While externally sourced images are assembled into demonstrative hyper-aesthetical evidentiary networks that amplify, multiply, and synthesise sensing and sense-making to subvert state-controlled conditions of visuality in the work of *the Visual Investigations team*, singular self-produced photojournalistic images are used suggestively to mitigate uncertainty and signal authority in the "Lørenskog-disappearance". However, both forms of counter-visibilities can be considered *investigative* in the sense that they – albeit in different ways – visually disclose what normally eludes the public eye (Huxford, 2004, p. 4). While VG's ways of seeing position the viewer on the inside of an ongoing homicide investigation where the main suspect and the crime scene can be inspected from a multiplicity of vantage points by calling attention to what is hidden beyond the frame, the NYT's ways of seeing positions the viewer on the outside of contested events by calling attention to what is hidden in the image itself. Despite their differences in the epistemological positioning of the viewer, I would argue that these two investigative visions are not in conflict with each other. Rather, their temporal, numerical, and perspectival differences must be seen as complementary counter-visibilities that serve specific and different professional needs that investigative reporters can mobilise when arguing for their epistemic authority. Nevertheless, what unites them is that both visions are instrumental in the knowledge being produced, thus demonstrating the importance of accounting for the epistemic role of the visual in the mediation of journalistic authority in news texts. Analytically, this is all fine and well, but what is the wider importance of these insights? How can three textual analyses of episodic demarcation processes and visual claim-making in investigative journalism have any value beyond the local contexts they describe and speak to larger problem areas in journalism studies? Here is an idea as to how: If journalism is embedded in a set of configuring social and material conditions that both shape the forms of knowledge in news and threaten journalism as a professional field (Carlson & Lewis, 2020), then the three empirical studies of this thesis can serve as different illustrations of how journalists attempt to push back by learning new skills, demonstrating privileged knowledge, and intervening in credibility contests that are of interests to society writ large. By engaging in these epistemic endeavours, journalists simultaneously construct and reinvent themselves as professional people (Anderson, 2008; Zelizer, 1992). Thus, by adopting and incorporating new modes of knowing in their efforts to uncover transgressions of the moral and legal order (Ettema & Glasser, 1989), investigative reporters are at the forefront of journalism's occupational struggle, where their work both maintains and extends the media's self-proclaimed jurisdictional control as the Fourth Estate (Anderson & Schudson, 2020). It maintains the jurisdiction in the sense that emerging visual technologies and advanced forms of data journalism update and expand the arsenal of potential evidence that can be mobilised against the usual suspects of oppressors and wrongdoers, thus enabling journalism to uphold its societal relevance and monitoring role over other institutions. However, new technologies can also contribute to extending the jurisdiction in the sense that they may give reporters the opportunity to seize entirely new problems over which they can demonstrate their expertise and act as watchdogs on behalf of the public. The latter is perhaps best illustrated in the ways journalists have strategically positioned themselves as verifiers and fact-checkers of social media content (Gynnild, 2017; Mortensen & McCrow-Young, 2022; Vos & Thomas, 2018). The three studies of this thesis also showcase that the epistemic work of journalists does not happen in a vacuum. By taking inspiration from neighbouring knowledge disciplines such as science, human rights research, detective work, the intelligence community, and computer programming, investigative reporters today can uncover previously uncharted strata in both the environment and society and produce knowledge that is embedded in a wider epistemic structure than ever before. Drawing on standards and practices of other knowledge-producing fields expands not only what investigative reporters can claim to know and increases the credibility of concrete allegations put forward, but also contributes to elevating and strengthening the entire journalistic field as a competent and trustworthy provider of authoritative knowledge that is both socially relevant and produced according to high epistemic standards. Consequently, there is no greater performative marker of journalistic authority today than invoking the epistemology of investigative journalism.

7. Limitations and Implications for Future Research

The framing introduction ends with some reflections on the limitations of the research approach I have taken in the three articles, along with a brief discussion of some of the implications the findings may have for future research. To reiterate, this project has aimed to explore the boundaries, epistemologies, and visibilities of investigative journalism. To achieve this, the thesis adopted a sociological approach to the study of the visuality and epistemology of investigative journalism, which was argued to be deemed inseparable. The reverence surrounding investigative journalism as a scientific object in existing scholarship and the subsequent analytical problem of demarcation prompted me to conceptualise investigative journalism as a moving target under social negotiation. While this theoretical move enabled a research position that circumvented both the tendencies to engage in technological determinism and uncritically adopt normative internalist accounts, the boundary theory approach simultaneously locked the thesis's analytical apparatus to the discursive realm. Consequently, an intrinsic limitation of the boundary work approach is that it runs the risk of neglecting deep structures and non-discursive elements in the ontological domain that can also affect social boundaries (Anderson & Schudson, 2020, p. 146). Critics have also argued that the outsider position enabled by the approach is only illusory as it is impossible to analyse boundaries and distinction-making without acknowledging the researcher as an active participant in the very boundaries he is describing (Bjerknes, 2022b, p. 16). This inherent problem can be observed in the double standard of chapters two and three, where I first spend ten pages criticising normative stakeholder definitions of investigative journalism before accepting 'investigative aesthetics' as something uniquely different without thinking twice about it, which is odd since at least one of the authors (Eyal Weizman), in addition to being an academic, also is an agent located at the periphery of the journalistic field. This illustrates that "boundary work becomes an escapable practice, it would seem, [also] for those who study boundaries" (Gieryn, 1999, p. 28).

A related and additional limitation to the research approach I have taken is the emphasis on discursive performativity, implicit antagonism, and occupational struggle. The thesis joins several scholars who have argued that self-narration, strategic rituals of objectivity, and the adoption of new epistemic practices are primarily driven by efforts to protect and bolster the authority of the journalistic profession (Anderson, 2018; Schudson, 1978; Tuchman, 1978; Zelizer, 1992). Sylvain Parasie (2022) takes issue with such a cynical notion and argues that journalists also may be driven by more idealistic motives such as actually contributing to democracy. In this, he is, of course, entirely right. Better and more empirically grounded journalism "can help citizens make better decisions, make government more transparent, and shed light on systemic processes of discrimination and injustices" (p. 236). But does this exclude that relational prestige and power among journalists and other knowledge professions are also of great significance? In accordance with a moderate social constructionist stance, I do not see these as mutually exclusive explanations but rather equally reasonable and compatible truths.

While the thesis has managed to get close to the visuality and epistemology of investigative journalism on a textual level, it is obviously a great limitation that I have been unable to gain access to other types of empirical data. Unfortunately, this omission speaks to a larger gap in the research literature on investigative journalism, which in the last twenty years has only seen a handful of ethnographic studies (e.g. Parasie, 2015). One of the main reasons for this gap is probably that researchers are rarely given ringside access to ongoing controversial investigative projects. From an academic perspective, the secretiveness that seems to surround investigative journalism is both frustrating and difficult to understand, especially considering that colleagues in the field of criminology have done extensive fieldwork on homicide investigations with full access to crime scenes, interrogations, and case documents (see Innes, 2003). Envy aside, there is an obvious need for future empirical studies on the epistemology of investigative journalism – preferably combining ethnographic observations with in-depth interviews. Such studies should not only seek to update and add empirical weight to the framework originally devised by Ettema and Glasser

(1985), but also probe how new sensing devices and emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence are affecting what investigative reporters can claim to know. However, based on the findings from this thesis, future studies of epistemic practices in investigative journalism should be attentive to the amalgamation of institutionalised and emerging ways of knowing and how the relationship between epistemology and technology is mutually constitutive. Generally, studies of technological change in journalism should not just focus on what is novel but also interrogate what endures.

Finally, this thesis has focused on a type of journalism that is empirically extremely rare. Contrary to popular belief, investigative reporting makes up only a small fraction of all published professional news (Fink & Schudson, 2014, p. 13; Knobel, 2018, p. 24). This problem is not lessened by the fact that the term “investigative journalism” is increasingly becoming associated with advanced forms of data journalism and global collaborative projects. The danger with such a narrow stakeholder understanding that is further cemented by academic attention is that smaller and local news outlets do not consider investigative journalism as something they can do. In order to correct these elite-driven conceptions and to “demystify” investigative journalism (Wuergler et al., 2023, p. 15), research should turn its attention to how watchdog reporting can be developed as a local and small-scale enterprise. However, such a task is well beyond the bounds of this thesis. Perhaps another time. In the words of Thomas F. Gieryn (1999, p. 35): lots of work ahead.

References

Abbott, A. (1988). *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor*. University: University of Chicago Press.

Adami, E. (2016). How Do You Watch a Revolution? Notes from the 21st Century. *Journal of Visual Culture, 15*(1), 69-84.

Ahva, L., & Steensen, S. (2020). Journalism Theory. In K. Wahl-Jorgensen & T. Hanitzsch (Eds.), *The Handbook of Journalism Studies* (Second ed., pp. 38-54). New York: Routledge.

Allan, S. (2013). *Citizen Witnessing: Revisioning Journalism in Times of Crisis*. Oxford: Polity Press.

Alvesson, M., & Sköldberg, K. (2018). *Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research* (Third ed.). London: Sage.

Anden-Papadopoulos, K. (2020). The" Image-as-Forensic-Evidence" Economy in the Post-2011 Syrian Conflict: The Power and Constraints of Contemporary Practices of Video Activism. *International Journal of Communication (19328036), 14*.

Andén-Papadopoulos, K., & Pantti, M. (2012). *Amateur Images and Global News*. Bristol: Intellect Books.

Anderson, C. W. (2008). Journalism: Expertise, Authority, and Power in Democratic Life. In D. Hesmondhalgh & J. Toynbee (Eds.), *The Media and Social Theory* (pp. 248-264). London: Routledge.

Anderson, C. W. (2013). What Aggregators Do: Towards a Networked Concept of Journalistic Expertise in the Digital Age. *Journalism, 14*(8), 1008-1023.

Anderson, C. W. (2018). *Apostles of Certainty: Data Journalism and the Politics of Doubt*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Anderson, C. W., & Schudson, M. (2020). Objectivity, Professionalism, and Truth Seeking. In K. Wahl-Jorgensen & T. Hanitzsch (Eds.), *The Handbook of Journalism Studies* (Second ed., pp. 136-150). New York: Routledge.

Ashuri, T., & Pinchevski, A. (2009). Witnessing as a Field. In P. Frosh & A. Pinchevski (Eds.), *Media Witnessing: Testimony in the Age of Mass Communication* (pp. 133-157). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Aspers, P., & Corte, U. (2019). What Is Qualitative in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Sociology, 42*, 139-160.

Aucoin, J. (2005). *The Evolution of American Investigative Journalism*. Missouri: University of Missouri Press.

Aucoin, J. L. (2007). Journalistic Moral Engagement: Narrative Strategies in American Muckraking. *Journalism, 8*(5), 559-572.

Audi, R. (2011). *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge* (Third ed.). London: Routledge.

Azoulay, A. (2008). *The Civil Contract of Photography*. New York: Zone Books.

Bachelard, G. ([1938]2002). *The Formation of the Scientific Mind*. Manchester: Clinamen Press.

Bal, M. (2003). Visual Essentialism and the Object of Visual Culture. *Journal of Visual Culture, 2*(1), 5-32.

Barlebo Wenneberg, S. (2001). *Socialkontruktivisme: Positioner, Problemer Och Perspektiv [Socialconstructivism: Positions, Problems and Perspectives]*. Malmö: Liber.

Barnes, B., Bloor, D., & Henry, J. (1996). *Scientific Knowledge: A Sociological Analysis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bauder, D. (2022). Detailed 'Open Source' News Investigations Are Catching On. *AP News*. Retrieved from https://apnews.com/article/open-source-media-investigations-d1093d4ea4e98a3ae21850196847c6e1

Becker, K., & Frosh, P. (2015). Visual Frictions. *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture, 7*(1), 30347.

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. ([1966]1991). *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Penguin Books.

Bhaskar, R. ([1975] 2008). *A Realist Theory of Science*. London: Routledge.

Birnbauer, B. (2018). *The Rise of Nonprofit Investigative Journalism in the United States*. New York: Routledge.

Bjerknes, F. (2019). *Woodward, Bernstein and Bordieu: Sketching Investigative Journalism as a Field*. Course Paper. University of Bergen.

Bjerknes, F. (2022a). Images of Transgressions: Visuals as Reconstructed Evidence in Digital Investigative Journalism. *Journalism Studies, 23*(8), 951-973. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2022.2061574

Bjerknes, F. (2022b). Inventive Factfinders: Investigative Journalism as Professional Self-Representation, Marker of Identity and Boundary Work. *Journalism Practice, 16*(6), 1037-1056. doi:10.1080/17512786.2020.1845780

Bjerknes, F. (2022c). *Social Constructionism and Critical Realism: Selecting Metatheory in the Study of the Epistemologies of Journalism*. Course paper. NTNU. Trondheim.

Bjerknes, F. (2023). Visualising a Murder Mystery: Shifting Visibilities and Epistemic Uncertainty in Investigative Crime Journalism.

Block, L. (2023). The Long History of Osint. *Journal of Intelligence History*, 1-15. doi:10.1080/16161262.2023.2224091

Bock, M. A. (2021). *Seeing Justice: Witnessing, Crime and Punishment in Visual Media*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Boland-Rudder, H., & Fitzgibbon, W. (2021). Data Journalism in a Time of Epic Data Leaks. In H. De Burgh & P. Lashmar (Eds.), *Investigative Journalism* (Third ed., pp. 17-29). London: Routledge.

Boréus, K., & Bergström, G. (2017). *Analyzing Text and Discourse: Eight Approaches for the Social Sciences*. London: Sage.

Borins, S., & Herst, B. (2020). Beyond "Woodstein": Narratives of Investigative Journalism. *Journalism Practice, 14*(7), 769-790. doi:10.1080/17512786.2019.1664927

Bourdieu, P. (1992). The Practice of Reflexive Sociology (the Paris Workshop). In P. Bourdieu & L. Wacquant (Eds.), *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (pp. 216-260). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Brandtzaeg, P. B., Lüders, M., Spangenberg, J., Rath-Wiggins, L., & Følstad, A. (2016). Emerging Journalistic Verification Practices Concerning Social Media. *Journalism Practice, 10*(3), 323-342.

Brennen, B. (2003). Sweat Not Melodrama: Reading the Structure of Feeling in All the President's Men. *Journalism, 4*(1), 113-131.

Brighenti, A. (2007). Visibility: A Category for the Social Sciences. *Current Sociology, 55*(3), 323-342.

Brighenti, A. (2010). *Visibility in Social Theory and Social Research*: Springer.

Broersma, M. (2011). Journalism as Performative Discourse. In V. Rupar (Ed.), *Journalism and Meaning-Making: Reading the Newspaper* (pp. 15-35). Cresskill: Hampton Press.

Bromley, M. (2005). Subterfuge as Public Service: Investigative Journalism as Idealized Journalism. In S. Allan (Ed.), *Journalism: Critical Issues* (pp. 313-327). Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Bromley, M. (2008). Investigative Journalism and Scholarship. In H. de Burgh (Ed.), *Investigative Journalism* (Second ed., pp. 174-188). London: Routledge.

Broussard, M. (2015). Artificial Intelligence for Investigative Reporting: Using an Expert System to Enhance Journalists' Ability to Discover Original Public Affairs Stories. *Digital Journalism, 3*(6), 814-831.

Browne, M., & Engelbrecht, C. (2020). The David Mcatee Shooting: Did Aggressive Policing Lead to a Fatal Outcome? *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/video/us/100000007175316/the-david-mcatee-shooting-did-aggressive-policing-lead-to-a-fatal-outcome.html?playlistId=video/investigations

Browne, M., Koettl, C., Singhvi, A., Reneau, N., Al Hlou, Y., & Jordan, D. (2018). One Bulding, One Bomb: How Assad Gassed His Own People. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/06/25/world/middleeast/syria-chemical-attack-douma.html

Browne, M., Singhvi, A., Grothjan, E., Parshina-Kottas, Y., Patanjali, K., Peyton, M., . . . Wilhelm, B. (2018). How We Created a Virtual Scrime Scene to Investigate Syria's Chemical Attack. *The New York Times*.

Browne, M., Singhvi, A., Reneau, N., & Jordan, D. (2020). How the Police Killed Breonna Taylor. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/video/us/100000007348445/breonna-taylor-death-cops.html?playlistId=video/investigations

Browne, M., Willis, H., Hill, E., Marcolini, B., Koettl, C., & Triebert, C. (2020). How the Times Makes Visual Investigations. *YouTube*. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=reTUxfQsSUQ

Browne, M., & Xiao, M. (2020). The Killing of Rayshard Brooks: How a 41-Minute Police Encounter Suddenly Turned Fatal. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/video/us/100000007198581/rayshard-brooks-killing-garrett-rolfe.html?playlistId=video/investigations

Bruner, J. (1991). The Narrative Construction of Reality. *Critical Inquiry, 18*(1), 1-21.

Burr, V. (2015). *Social Constructionism* (Third ed.). London: Routledge.

Canals, R. (2020). Visual Trust. Reliability, Accountability and Forgery in Religious, Scientific and Social Images. *Anthrovision. Vaneasa Online Journal, 8*.

Cancela, P., Gerber, D., & Dubied, A. (2021). "To Me, It's Normal Journalism" Professional Perceptions of Investigative Journalism and Evaluations of Personal Commitment. *Journalism Practice, 15*(6), 878-893. doi:10.1080/17512786.2021.1876525

Canella, G. (2021). Journalistic Power: Constructing the "Truth" and the Economics of Objectivity. *Journalism Practice*, 1-17. doi:10.1080/17512786.2021.1914708

Caple, H. (2013). *Photojournalism: A Social Semiotic Approach*. Basingstoke: Springer.

Carlson, M. (2016). Metajournalistic Discourse and the Meanings of Journalism: Definitional Control, Boundary Work, and Legitimation. *Communication Theory, 26*(4), 349-368. doi:10.1111/comt.12088

Carlson, M. (2017). *Journalistic Authority: Legitimating News in the Digital Era*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Carlson, M. (2022). Journalists, Epistemology, and Authority. In S. Allan (Ed.), *The Routledge Companion to News and Journalism* (pp. 64-72): Routledge.

Carlson, M., & Lewis, S. C. (2015). *Boundaries of Journalism: Professionalism, Practices and Participation*. New York: Routledge.

Carlson, M., & Lewis, S. C. (2020). Boundary Work. In K. Wahl-Jorgensen & T. Hanitzsch (Eds.), *The Handbook of Journalism Studies* (Second ed., pp. 123-136). New York: Routledge.

Carson, A. (2021). *Investigative Journalism, Democracy and the Digital Age*. London: Taylor & Francis.

Carson, A., & Farhall, K. (2018). Understanding Collaborative Investigative Journalism in a "Post-Truth" Age. *Journalism Studies, 19*(13), 1899-1911.

Cheruiyot, D., & Ferrer-Conill, R. (2018). "Fact-Checking Africa" Epistemologies, Data and the Expansion of Journalistic Discourse. *Digital Journalism, 6*(8), 964-975.

Chibnall, S. (1977). *Law and Order News: An Analysis of Crime Reporting in the British Press*. London: Tavistock Publications.

Chouliaraki, L. (2015a). Digital Witnessing in Conflict Zones: The Politics of Remediation. *Information, Communication & Society, 18*(11), 1362-1377.

Chouliaraki, L. (2015b). Digital Witnessing in War Journalism: The Case of Post-Arab Spring Conflicts. *Popular Communication, 13*(2), 105-119.

Chouliaraki, L., & Al-Ghazzi, O. (2022). Beyond Verification: Flesh Witnessing and the Significance of Embodiment in Conflict News. *Journalism, 23*(3), 649-667.

Clarke, C. (2018). A Matter of Perspective: Truth, Evidence and the Role of Photography as an Investigative Tool. In O. Hahn & F. Stalph (Eds.), *Digital Investigative Journalism* (pp. 157-169). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan/Springer.

Coddington, M. (2015). Clarifying Journalism's Quantitative Turn: A Typology for Evaluating Data Journalism, Computational Journalism, and Computer-Assisted Reporting. *Digital Journalism, 3*(3), 331-348.

Coddington, M. (2019). *Aggregating the News: Secondhand Knowledge and the Erosion of Journalistic Authority*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Cooper, G. (2021). New Models of Funding and Executing. In H. De Burgh & P. Lashmar (Eds.), *Investigative Journalism* (3rd ed., pp. 44-56). London: Routledge.

Cordell, M. (2009). What Is Happening to Investigative Journalism?: A Pilot Study of Abc's Four Corners. *Pacific Journalism Review, 15*(2), 118-131.

Danermark, B., Ekström, M., & Karlsson, J. C. (2019). *Explaining Society: Critical Realism in the Social Sciences* (Second ed.). London: Routledge.

Danielson, M. (2023). Disclaiming, Mitigating, and Character Boosting—How Targets of Investigate Journalism Negotiate Guilt, Excuses, Justification, and Morality. *Journalism Studies, 24*(4), 532-551.

Danielson, M., & Nykvist, A. (2023). From Investigative to Critical Local Journalism: A Quantitative Content Analysis of Critical Reporting in Local Swedish Newspapers with a New Analytical Focus. *Journalistica, 17*(1). doi:10.7146/journalistica.v17i1.133089

Darrach, A. (2020). How the New York Times Verfified the Iran Missile-Strike Footage. *Columbia Journalism Review*. Retrieved from https://www.cjr.org/q_and_a/new-york-times-iran-ukraine-flight.php

Daston, L., & Galison, P. (2007). *Objectivity*. New York: Zone Books.

De Burgh, H. (2008). *Investigative Journalism* (Second ed.). London: Routledge.

De Burgh, H., & Lashmar, P. (2021). *Investigative Journalism* (Third ed.). London: Routledge.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2018). *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Fifth ed.).

Deuze, M. (2005). What Is Journalism? Professional Identity and Ideology of Journalists Reconsidered. *Journalism, 6*(4), 442-464.

Dubberley, S., Koenig, A., & Murray, D. (2020). *Digital Witness: Using Open Source Information for Human Rights Investigation, Documentation, and Accountability*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dufour, D., & Delage, C. (2015). *Images of Conviction: The Construction of Visual Evidence*. Paris: Le Bal.

Ekström, M. (2002). Epistemologies of Tv Journalism: A Theoretical Framework. *Journalism, 3*(3), 259-282.

Ekström, M., Ramsälv, A., & Westlund, O. (2021). The Epistemologies of Breaking News. *Journalism Studies, 22*(2), 174-192.

Ekström, M., & Westlund, O. (2019a). The Dislocation of News Journalism: A Conceptual Framework for the Study of Epistemologies of Digital Journalism. *Media and Communication, 7*(1), 259-270.

Ekström, M., & Westlund, O. (2019b). Epistemology and Journalism. In H. Örnebring (Ed.), *Oxford Encyclopedia of Journalism Studies*. doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.806

Eldridge II, S. A. (2019). Where Do We Draw the Line? Interlopers, (Ant)Agonists, and an Unbounded Journalistic Field. *Media and Communication, 7*(4), 8-18.

Ericson, R. V., Baranek, P. M., & Chan, J. B. (1987). *Visualizing Deviance: A Study of News Organization*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Ericson, R. V., Baranek, P. M., & Chan, J. B. (1989). *Negotiating Control: A Study of News Sources*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Ettema, J. S., & Glasser, T. L. (1985). On the Epistemology of Investigative Journalism. *Communication, 8*(2), 183-206.

Ettema, J. S., & Glasser, T. L. (1988). Narrative Form and Moral Force - the Realization of Innocence and Guilt through Investigative Journalism. *Journal of Communication, 38*(3), 8-26.

Ettema, J. S., & Glasser, T. L. (1989). Investigative Journalism and the Moral Order. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 6*(1), 1-20.

Ettema, J. S., & Glasser, T. L. (1998). *Custodians of Conscience: Investigative Journalism and Public Virtue*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Fairclough, N. (2010). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (Second ed.). London: Routledge.

Feldstein, M. (2006). A Muckraking Model: Investigative Reporting Cycles in American History. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics, 11*(2), 105-120.

Felle, T. (2016). Digital Watchdogs? Data Reporting and the News Media's Traditional 'Fourth Estate' Function. *Journalism, 17*(1), 85-96.

Fink, K., & Schudson, M. (2014). The Rise of Contextual Journalism, 1950s–2000s. *Journalism, 15*(1), 3-20.

Fishman, M. (1980). *Manufacturing the News*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Flew, T., Spurgeon, C., Daniel, A., & Swift, A. (2012). The Promise of Computational Journalism. *Journalism Practice, 6*(2), 157-171.

Flick, U. (2018). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (Sixth ed.). London: Sage.

Ford, H., & Richardson, M. (2023). Framing Data Witnessing: Airwars and the Production of Authority in Conflict Monitoring. *Media, Culture & Society, 45*(4), 805-821.

Foster, H. (1988). *Vision and Visuality*. Seattle: Bay View Press.

Foucault, M. (1971). Orders of Discourse. *Social Science Information, 10*(2), 7-30.

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Pantheon.

Foucault, M. ([1972] 2002). *Archaeology of Knowledge*. New York: Routledge.

Franklin, B. (2008). *Pulling Newspapers Apart: Analysing Print Journalism*. London: Routledge.

Fuller, M., & Weizman, E. (2021). *Investigative Aesthetics: Conflicts and Commons in the Politics of Truth*. London: Verso.

Furuly, J. G., Vold, H. B., Solvang, R., Førsund, S., & Egeberg, K. (2022). *Faktisk Verifiserbar*. Retrieved from SKUP: https://www.skup.no/sites/default/files/2023-03/Faktisk%20Verifiserbar%20-%20Prosjekt%20Faktisk%20Verifiserbar.pdf

Fürsich, E. (2009). In Defense of Textual Analysis: Restoring a Challenged Method for Journalism and Media Studies. *Journalism Studies, 10*(2), 238-252.

Gaines, J., & Renov, M. (1999). *Collecting Visible Evidence*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Ganguly, M. (2022). *The Future of Investigative Journalism in the Age of Automation, Open-Source Intelligence (Osint) and Artificial Intelligence (Ai).* (Phd). University of Westminister,

Gans, H. J. (1979). *Deciding What's News: A Study of Cbs Evening News, Nbc Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time* (First ed.). New York: Pantheon Books.

Gates, K. (2013). The Cultural Labor of Surveillance: Video Forensics, Computational Objectivity, and the Production of Visual Evidence. *Social Semiotics, 23*(2), 242-260.

Gates, K. (2020). Media Evidence and Forensic Journalism. *Surveillance & Society, 18*(3), 403-408.

Gates, K. (2023). Day of Rage: Forensic Journalism and the Us Capitol Riot. *Media, Culture & Society*, 01634437231188449.

Gauthier, G. (2005). A Realist Point of View on News Journalism. *Journalism Studies, 6*(1), 51-60.

Gearing, A. (2021). *Disrupting Investigative Journalism: Moment of Death or Dramatic Rebirth?* London: Routledge.

Gergen, K. J. (2015). *An Invitation to Social Construction*. London: Sage.

Gerli, M., Mazzoni, M., & Mincigrucci, R. (2018). Constraints and Limitations of Investigative Journalism in Hungary, Italy, Latvia and Romania. *European Journal of Communication, 33*(1), 22-36.

Giddens, A. (1984). *The Constitution of Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gieryn, T. F. (1983). Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-Science: Strains and Interests in Professional Ideologies of Scientists. *American Sociological Review, 48*(6), 781-795.

Gieryn, T. F. (1999). *Cultural Boundaries of Science: Credibility on the Line*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Godler, Y., & Reich, Z. (2017). Journalistic Evidence: Cross-Verification as a Constituent of Mediated Knowledge. *Journalism, 18*(5), 558-574.

Godler, Y., Reich, Z., & Miller, B. (2020). Social Epistemology as a New Paradigm for Journalism and Media Studies. *New Media & Society, 22*(2), 213-229.

Godulla, A. (2018). The Context Verification of Digital Photographs. In O. Hahn & F. Stalph (Eds.), *Digital Investigative Journalism* (pp. 171-178). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan/Springer.

Goodwin, C. (1994). Professional Vision. *American Anthropologist, 96*(3), 606-633.

Graves, L. (2018). Boundaries Not Drawn: Mapping the Institutional Roots of the Global Fact-Checking Movement. *Journalism Studies, 19*(5), 613-631.

Greenwald, M., & Bernt, J. (2000). *The Big Chill: Investigative Reporting in the Current Media Environment*. Ames, IO: Iowa State University Press.

Griffin, M. (2018). Visual Images and Fields of Journalism, Cultural Production, and Power. *Journalism & Communication Monographs, 20*(4), 325-330. doi:10.1177/1522637918805501

Groot Kormelink, T., & Costera Meijer, I. (2015). Truthful or Engaging? Surpassing the Dilemma of Reality Versus Storytelling in Journalism. *Digital Journalism, 3*(2), 158-174.

Gynnild, A. (2014a). Journalism Innovation Leads to Innovation Journalism: The Impact of Computational Exploration on Changing Mindsets. *Journalism, 15*(6), 713-730.

Gynnild, A. (2014b). The Robot Eye Witness: Extending Visual Journalism through Drone Surveillance. *Digital Journalism, 2*(3), 334-343.

Gynnild, A. (2014c). Surveillance Videos and Visual Transparency in Journalism. *Journalism Studies, 15*(4), 449-463.

Gynnild, A. (2017). The Visual Power of News Agencies. *Nordicom Review, 38*(s2), 25-39.

Hahn, O., & Stalph, F. (2018). *Digital Investigative Journalism*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan/Springer.

Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clarke, J., & Roberts, B. (1978). *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order*. London: The Macmillan Press.

Hamilton, J. T. (2016). *Democracy's Detectives: The Economics of Investigative Journalism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Harcup, T. (2015). *Journalism: Principles and Practice* (3rd ed.). London: SAGE.

Harkin, J., & Feeney, L. (2019). What Happened in Douma? Searching for Facts in the Fog of Syria's Propaganda War. *The Intercept*. Retrieved from https://theintercept.com/2019/02/09/douma-chemical-attack-evidence-syria/

Hatfield, J. M. (2023). There Is No Such Thing as Open Source Intelligence. *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 1-22.

Hermann, A. K. (2016). Ethnographic Journalism. *Journalism, 17*(2), 260-278.

Higgins, E. (2018). Visual Analysis: Verification Via Geolocation and Photographs. In O. Hahn & F. Stalph (Eds.), *Digital Investigative Journalism* (pp. 137-142). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan/Springer.

Higgins, K. C. (2022). Rethinking Visual Criminalization: News Images and the Mediated Spacetime of Crime Events. *Visual Communication*, 14703572221102547.

Houston, B. (2010). The Future of Investigative Journalism. *Daedalus, 139*(2), 45-56.

Hovden, J. F. (2008). *Profane and Sacred. A Study of the Norwegian Journalistic Field*: The University of Bergen.

Hughes, E. C. (1971). *The Sociological Eye: Selected Papers*. Chicago: Aldine-Atherton.

Huxford, J. (2004). *Surveillance, Witnessing and Spectatorship: The News and the 'War of Images'.* Paper presented at the Proceedings of the Media Ecology Association.

Innes, M. (2003). *Investigating Murder: Detective Work and the Police Response to Criminal Homicide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

James, W. (1890). *The Principles of Psychology*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.

Jolkovski, A. (2020). Ny Times' Pioneering Visual Investigations: Behind the Scenes. *WAN-IFRA*. Retrieved from https://wan-ifra.org/2020/01/ny-times-pioneering-visual-investigations-behind-the-scenes/

Karadimitriou, A., von Krogh, T., Ruggiero, C., Biancalana, C., Bomba, M., & Lo, W. H. (2022). Investigative Journalism and the Watchdog Role of News Media: Between Acute Challenges and Exceptional Counterbalances. In J. Trappel & T. Tomaz (Eds.), *Success and Failure in News Media Performance: Comparative Analysis in the Media for Democracy Monitor 2021* (pp. 101-125). Gothenburg: Nordicom.

Karlsen, J., & Stavelin, E. (2014). Computational Journalism in Norwegian Newsrooms. *Journalism Practice, 8*(1), 34-48.

Keenan, T. (2020). Counter-Forensics and Photography. In M. Durden & J. Tormey (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Photography Theory* (pp. 276-292). London: Routledge.

Keenan, T., & Weizman, E. (2012). *Mengele's Skull: The Advent of a Forensic Aesthetics*. Berlin: Sternberg and Portikus.

Keller, R. (2011). The Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse (Skad). *Human Studies, 34*(1), 43.

Keller, R. (2018). The Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse: An Introduction. In R. Keller, A.-K. Hornidge, & W. J. Schünemann (Eds.), *The Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse: Investigating the Politics of Knowledge and Meaning-Making* (pp. 16-47). London: Routledge.

Keller, R., Hornidge, A.-K., & Schünemann, W. J. (2018). *The Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse: Investigating the Politics of Knowledge and Meaning-Making*. London: Routledge.

Klinnik, A., & Prigent, G. (2021). "The Audience Is Seeing the Evidence for Themselves". *Story Jungle*. Retrieved from https://en.storyjungle.io/interviews/-the-audience-is-seeing-the-evidence-for-themselves-_a-231-6366.html

Knobel, B. (2018). *The Watchdog Still Barks: How Accountability Reporting Evolved for the Digital Age*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Knorr-Cetina, K. (1999). *Epistemic Cultures: How the Sciences Make Knowledge*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Koettl, C., Murray, D., & Dubberley, S. (2020). Open Source Investigation for Human Rights Reporting. In S. Dubberley, A. Koenig, & D. Murray (Eds.), *Digital Witness: Using Open Source Information for Human Rights Investigation, Documentation, and Accountability* (pp. 12-31). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Konow Lund, M. (2020). Reconstructing Investigative Journalism at Emerging Organisations. *The Journal of Media Innovations, 6*(Special Issue), 9-22.

Kovach, B., & Rosenstiel, T. (2021). *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect* (Fourth ed.). New York: Random House.

Kress, G. (2010). *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication*. London: Routledge.

Kress, G. R., & Van Leeuwen, T. (2020). *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (Third ed.). London: Routledge.

Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (Fourth ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Krippendorff, K., & Bock, M. A. (2009). *The Content Analysis Reader*. London: Sage.

Kuhn, T. S. (1962). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Kunert, J., Brüggemann, M., Frech, J., Lilienthal, V., & Loosen, W. (2022). "You Suck It up and You Deal with It": Blind Spots in Investigative Reporting and How to Overcome Them. *Journalism, 0*(0), 14648849221146929. doi:10.1177/14648849221146929

Kunert, J., Frech, J., Brüggemann, M., Lilienthal, V., & Loosen, W. (2022). How Investigative Journalists around the World Adopt Innovative Digital Practices. *Journalism Studies, 23*(7), 761-780.

Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (1985). *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso.

Lamont, M., & Molnár, V. (2002). The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences. *Annual Review of Sociology, 28*(1), 167-195.

Lanosga, G. (2014). New Views of Investigative Reporting in the Twentieth Century. *American Journalism, 31*(4), 490-506.

Lanosga, G., & Houston, B. (2017). Spotlight: Journalists Assess Investigative Reporting and Its Status in Society. *Journalism Practice, 11*(9), 1101-1120. doi:10.1080/17512786.2016.1228472

Lanosga, G., & Martin, J. (2018). Journalists, Sources, and Policy Outcomes: Insights from Three-Plus Decades of Investigative Reporting Contest Entries. *Journalism, 19*(12), 1676-1693. doi:10.1177/1464884916683555

Larsen, A. G. (2017). Investigative Reporting in the Networked Media Environment: Journalists' Use of Social Media in Reporting Violent Extremism. *Journalism Practice, 11*(10), 1231-1245.

Latour, B. (1986). Visualization and Cognition. *Knowledge and Society, 6*(6), 1-40.

Latour, B., & Woolgar, S. (1986). *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Lau, R. W. (2004). Critical Realism and News Production. *Media, Culture & Society, 26*(5), 693-711.

Lau, R. W. (2012). Re-Theorizing News' Construction of Reality: A Realist-Discourse-Theoretic Approach. *Journalism, 13*(7), 886-902.

Le Masurier, M. (2015). What Is Slow Journalism? *Journalism Practice, 9*(2), 138-152.

Levine, M. (1980). Investigative Reporting as a Research Method: An Analysis of Bernstein and Woodward's All the President's Men. *American Psychologist, 35*, 626-638. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.35.7.626

Lewis, S. C., & Westlund, O. (2015). Big Data and Journalism: Epistemology, Expertise, Economics, and Ethics. *Digital Journalism, 3*(3), 447-466.

Linden, C.-G. (2017). Decades of Automation in the Newsroom: Why Are There Still So Many Jobs in Journalism? *Digital Journalism, 5*(2), 123-140.

Lowe, P. (2020). The Forensic Turn: Bearing Witness and the 'Thingness' of the Photograph. In L. Kennedy & C. Patrick (Eds.), *The Violence of the Image* (pp. 226-254): Routledge.

MacFadyen, G. (2008). The Practices of Investigative Journalism. In H. De burgh (Ed.), *Investigative Journalism* (pp. 149-150): Routledge.

Mannheim, K. (1968). *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Harcourt, Brace.

Matheson, D., & Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2020). The Epistemology of Live Blogging. *New Media & Society, 22*(2), 300-316. doi:10.1177/1461444819856926

McMahon, F. (2021). Digital Sleuthing. In H. De Burgh & P. Lashmar (Eds.), *Investigative Journalism* (3rd ed., pp. 57-72). London: Routledge.

Merton, R. K. (1968). *Social Theory and Social Structure*. New York: Free Press.

Merton, R. K. (1973). *The Sociology of Science: Theoretical and Empirical Investigations*. Chicago: University of Chicago press.

Mirzoeff, N. (2011). The Right to Look. *Critical Inquiry, 37*(3), 473-496.

Molotch, H., & Lester, M. (1974). News as Purposive Behavior: On the Strategic Use of Routine Events, Accidents, and Scandals. *American Sociological Review*, 101-112.

Morini, F. (2023). Data Journalism as "Terra Incognita": Newcomers' Tensions in Shifting Towards Data Journalism Epistemology. *Journalism Practice*, 1-17.

Mortensen, M. (2014). *Journalism and Eyewitness Images: Digital Media, Participation, and Conflict*. London: Routledge.

Mortensen, M. (2022). Perpetrator Witnessing: Testing the Norms and Forms of Witnessing through Livestreaming Terror Attacks. *Journalism, 23*(3), 690-707.

Mortensen, M., & McCrow-Young, A. (2022). *Social Media Images and Conflicts*: Taylor & Francis.

Muñoz-Torres, J. R. (2012). Truth and Objectivity in Journalism: Anatomy of an Endless Misunderstanding. *Journalism Studies, 13*(4), 566-582.

Müller, N. C., & Wiik, J. (2021). From Gatekeeper to Gate-Opener: Open-Source Spaces in Investigative Journalism. *Journalism Practice*, 1-20.

Maares, P., & Hanusch, F. (2022). Understanding Peripheral Journalism from the Boundary: A Conceptual Framework. *Digital Journalism*, 1-22.

Nematpoor, S., Hjorten, I. R., & Bartnes, A. (2022). Professor Mener Lørenskog-Saken Har Vært Overdekket. *NRK*. Retrieved from https://www.nrk.no/kultur/professor-mener-lorenskog-saken-har-vaert-overdekket-1.15961414

Neuberger, C., Bartsch, A., Fröhlich, R., Hanitzsch, T., Reinemann, C., & Schindler, J. (2023). The Digital Transformation of Knowledge Order: A Model for the Analysis of the Epistemic Crisis. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 1-22.

Newton, J. (2001). *The Burden of Visual Truth: The Role of Photojournalism in Mediating Reality*. New York: Routledge.

Nielsen, R. K. (2017). Digital News as Forms of Knowledge: A New Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge. In P. J. Boczkowski & C. W. Anderson (Eds.), *Remaking the News: Essays on the Future of Journalism Scholarship in the Digital Age* (pp. 91-109).

Nord, L. W. (2007). Investigative Journalism in Sweden: A Not So Noticeable Noble Art. *Journalism, 8*(5), 517-521.

Nygren, G. (2020). De-Professionalization and Fragmentation: Challenges for Local Journalism in Sweden. In A. Gulyas & D. Baines (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Local Media and Journalism* (pp. 158-166). London: Routledge.

Ottosen, R. (1996). *Fra Fjærpenn Til Internett: Journalister I Organisasjon Og Samfunn [from Quill to Internet: Journalists in Organization and Society]*. Oslo: Aschehough.

Pantti, M. (2020). Journalism and Witnessing. In K. Wahl-Jorgensen & T. Hanitzsch (Eds.), *The Handbook of Journalism Studies* (2nd ed., pp. 151-164). London: Routledge.

Pantti, M., & Sirén, S. (2015). The Fragility of Photo-Truth: Verification of Amateur Images in Finnish Newsrooms. *Digital Journalism, 3*(4), 495-512.

Parasie, S. (2015). Data-Driven Revelation? Epistemological Tensions in Investigative Journalism in the Age of "Big Data". *Digital Journalism, 3*(3), 364-380.

Parasie, S. (2022). *Computing the News: Data Journalism and the Search for Objectivity*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Park, R. E. (1940). News as a Form of Knowledge: A Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge. *American Journal of Sociology, 45*(5), 669-686.

Philo, G. (2007). Can Discourse Analysis Successfully Explain the Content of Media and Journalistic Practice? *Journalism Studies, 8*(2), 175-196.

Pinto, J. (2008). Muzzling the Watchdog: The Case of Disappearing Watchdog Journalism from Argentine Mainstream News. *Journalism, 9*(6), 750-774.

Popper, K. ([1959]2002). *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. London: Routledge.

Post, T. W. (2020). The Washington Post Announces New Visual Forensics Team [Press release]. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/pr/2020/09/24/washington-post-announces-new-visual-forensics-team/

Powers, M. (2012). "In Forms That Are Familiar and yet-to-Be Invented":American Journalism and the Discourse of Technologically Specific Work. *Journal of Communication Inquiry, 36*(1), 24-43. doi:10.1177/0196859911426009

Pritchard, D. (2018). *What Is This Thing Called Knowledge?* (Fourth ed.). London: Routledge.

Protess, D. L., Cook, F. L., Doppelt, J., Ettema, J. S., Gordon, M. T., Leff, D. R., & Miller, P. (1991). *The Journalism of Outrage: Investigative Reporting and Agenda Building in America*. New York: Guilford Press.

Ramsälv, A., Ekström, M., & Westlund, O. (2023). The Epistemologies of Data Journalism. *New Media & Society*, 14614448221150439.

Reich, Z. (2006). The Process Model of News Initiative. *Journalism Studies, 7*(4), 497-514. doi:10.1080/14616700600757928

Ristovska, S. (2018). Expanding the Epistemological Horizon: Institutionalised Visual Knowledge and Human Rights. *Javnost-the Public, 25*(1-2), 240-247.

Ristovska, S. (2022). Open-Source Investigation as a Genre of Conflict Reporting. *Journalism, 23*(3), 632-648. doi:10.1177/14648849211060627

Robertson, A. (2017). Narrative Analysis. In K. Boréus & G. Bergström (Eds.), *Analyzing Text and Discourse: Eight Approaches for the Social Sciences* (pp. 122-145). London: Sage.

Romaioli, D., & McNamee, S. (2021). (Mis) Constructing Social Construction: Answering the Critiques. *Theory & Psychology, 31*(3), 315-334.

Roosth, S., & Silbey, S. (2009). Science and Technology Studies: From Controversies to Posthumanist Social Theory. In B. S. Turner (Ed.), *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory* (pp. 451-474). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Rose, G. (2023). *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials* (Fifth ed.). London: Sage.

Ryfe, D. (2019a). The Ontology of Journalism. *Journalism, 20*(1), 206-209.

Ryfe, D. (2019b). The Warp and Woof of the Field of Journalism. *Digital Journalism, 7*(7), 844-859. doi:10.1080/21670811.2018.1517605

Sandhu, A., & Trottier, D. (2023). The Criminal Selfie: Conveying Grievance While Recording and Live Streaming Antisocial Behavior. *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research, 29*(3), 423-436. doi:10.1007/s10610-023-09548-8

Sarfatti Larsen, M. (1977). *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis*. Berkely, CA: University of California Press.

Sayer, A. (2010). *Method in Social Science: A Realist Approach* (Second ed.). London: Routledge.

Scanlan, C. (2019). How the New York Times Tracked Public Data to Produce «Killing Khashoggi». *Nieman Storyboard*. Retrieved from https://niemanstoryboard.org/stories/how-the-new-york-times-tracked-public-data-to-produce-killing-khashoggi/

Schreier, M. (2012). *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*. London: Sage.

Schreier, M. (2014). Qualitative Content Analysis. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis* (pp. 170-183). London: Sage.

Schudson, M. (1978). *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers*. New York: Basic Books.

Schudson, M. (2008). *Why Democracies Need an Unlovable Press*. Cambridge: Polity.

Schuppli, S. (2020). *Material Witness: Media, Forensics, Evidence*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT press.

Schutz, A. (1962). *Collected Papers I: The Problem of Social Reality*. The Hague: Nijhoff.

Sekula, A. (1986). The Body and the Archive. *October, 39*, 3-64.

Sekula, A. (2014). Photography and the Limits of National Identity. *Grey Room*(55), 28-33.

Sekula, A. ([1974] 1984). On the Invention of Photographic Meaning. In A. Sekula (Ed.), *Photography against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works 1973-1983* (pp. 2-21). Nova Scotia: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

Sekula, A. ([1975] 1984). The Instrumental Image: Steichen at War. In A. Sekula (Ed.), *Photography against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works 1973-1983* (pp. 3). Nova Scotia: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

Sekula, A. ([1978] 1984). Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation). In A. Sekula (Ed.), *Photography against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works 1973-1983* (pp. 52-75). Nova Scotia: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

Seo, S. (2020). 'We See More Because We Are Not There': Sourcing Norms and Routines in Covering Iran and North Korea. *New Media & Society, 22*(2), 283-299.

Silverman, C. (2014). *Verification Handbook: An Ultimate Guideline on Digital Age Sourcing for Emergency Coverage*: European Journalism Centre (EJC).

Smith, P. B., & Watson, R. (2023). Mediated Forensics and Militant Evidence: Rethinking the Camera as Weapon. *Media, Culture & Society, 45*(1), 36-56.

Star, S. L., & Griesemer, J. R. (1989). Institutional Ecology, Translations' and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907-39. *Social Studies of Science, 19*(3), 387-420.

Starr, P. (1982). *The Social Transformation of American Medicine: The Rise of a Sovereign Profession and the Making of a Vast Industry*. New York: Basic Books.

Steensen, S. (2019). Journalism's Epistemic Crisis and Its Solution: Disinformation, Datafication and Source Criticism. *Journalism, 20*(1), 185-189.

Steensen, S., & Westlund, O. (2021). *What Is Digital Journalism Studies?* London: Taylor & Francis.

Stetka, V., & Örnebring, H. (2013). Investigative Journalism in Central and Eastern Europe: Autonomy, Business Models, and Democratic Roles. *International Journal of Press-Politics, 18*(4), 413-435. doi:10.1177/1940161213495921

Stonbely, S. (2015). The Social and Intellectual Contexts of the Us "Newsroom Studies," and the Media Sociology of Today. *Journalism Studies, 16*(2), 259-274.

Stray, J. (2019). Making Artificial Intelligence Work for Investigative Journalism. *Digital Journalism, 7*(8), 1076-1097.

Strømme, E. S. (2020). Hva Forteller Skup-Rapportene Om Norsk Gravejournalistikk? *Norsk medietidsskrift, 27*(2), 1-16. doi:10.18261/ISSN.0805-9535-2020-02-04 ER

Stupart, R. (2022). Anger and the Investigative Journalist. *Journalism, 0*(0).

Sturken, M., & Cartwright, L. (2017). *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (Third ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.

Tagg, J. (1988). *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Tandoc, E. C., & Oh, S.-K. (2017). Small Departures, Big Continuities? *Journalism Studies, 18*(8), 997-1015. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2015.1104260

Tong, J. (2018). Journalistic Legitimacy Revisited: Collapse or Revival in the Digital Age? *Digital Journalism, 6*(2), 256-273.

Tong, J., & Zuo, L. (2021). The Inapplicability of Objectivity: Understanding the Work of Data Journalism. *Journalism Practice, 15*(2), 153-169.

Traue, B., Blanc, M., & Cambre, C. (2019). Visibilities and Visual Discourses: Rethinking the Social with the Image. *Qualitative Inquiry, 25*(4), 327-337.

Trewinnard, T., & Bell, F. (2018). Social Media Verification: Assessing Sources and Visual Content. In C. Ireton & J. Posetti (Eds.), *Journalism, 'Fake News' & Disinformation: Handbook of Journalism Education and Training* (pp. 101-114). Paris: Unesco.

Tuchman, G. (1978). *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*. New York: Free Press.

Usher, N. (2014). *Making News at the New York Times*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

van Dijk, T. A. (1988). *News as Discourse*. New York: Routledge.

Vos, T. P., & Thomas, R. J. (2018). The Discursive Construction of Journalistic Authority in a Post-Truth Age. *Journalism Studies, 19*(13), 2001-2010.

Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2013). The Strategic Ritual of Emotionality: A Case Study of Pulitzer Prize-Winning Articles. *Journalism, 14*(1), 129-145.

Waisbord, S. (2001). The Challenges of Investigative Journalism. *U. Miami L. Rev., 56*, 377.

Walton, M. (2010). Investigative Shortfall. *American Journalism Review, 32*(3), 18-34. Retrieved from https://ajrarchive.org/article.asp?id=4904

Ward, S. J. (2018). Epistemologies of Journalism. In T. P. Vos (Ed.), *Journalism* (Vol. 19, pp. 63-82).

Weber, M. (1978). *Economy and Society*. Berkely: University of California Press.

Weinberg, D. (2009). Social Constructionism. In B. S. Turner (Ed.), *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory* (Vol. 3, pp. 281-299). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Weizman, E. (2017). *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability*. New York: MIT Press.

Wictorsen, M. L., Strøm, T. J., & Daatland, P. (2021). *Noen Å Hate*. Retrieved from SKUP: https://www.skup.no/sites/default/files/2022-02/skup-rapport-noen-a-hate-2021.pdf

Woolgar, S., & Pawluch, D. (1985). Ontological Gerrymandering: The Anatomy of Social Problems Explanations. *Social Problems, 32*(3), 214-227.

Wright, K. (2011). Reality without Scare Quotes: Developing the Case for Critical Realism in Journalism Research. *Journalism Studies, 12*(2), 156-171.

Wuergler, L., & Cancela, P. (2022). How Do Investigative Journalists Initiate Their Stories? Exploring the Investigative Ecosystem of Switzerland. *Journalism Practice*, 1-22.

Wuergler, L., Cancela, P., Gerber, D., & Dubied, A. (2023). Identifying Investigative Pieces: A Multi-Step Method for Spotting a Blurred Journalistic Genre. *Journalism Studies*, 1-21.

Wuergler, L., & Dubied, A. (2023). Performing Investigative Identities: How Print Journalists Establish Authority through Their Texts. *Studies in Communication Sciences*, 1–20-21–20.

Young, M. L., Hermida, A., & Fulda, J. (2018). What Makes for Great Data Journalism? *Journalism Practice, 12*(1), 115-135. doi:10.1080/17512786.2016.1270171

Zelizer, B. (1992). *Covering the Body: The Kennedy Assassination, the Media, and the Shaping of Collective Memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Zelizer, B. (2004). When War Is Reduced to a Photograph. In S. Allan (Ed.), *Reporting War* (pp. 115-135). London/New York: Routledge.

Zelizer, B. (2007). On “Having Been There”: “Eyewitnessing” as a Journalistic Key Word. *Critical Studies in Media Communication, 24*(5), 408-428.

Zelizer, B. (2010). *About to Die: How News Images Move the Public*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Zelizer, B. (2019). Why Journalism Is About More Than Digital Technology. *Digital Journalism, 7*(3), 343-350.

Zelizer, B., Boczkowski, P. J., & Anderson, C. W. (2022). *The Journalism Manifesto*. Oxford: Polity.

Örnebring, H. (2016). Epistemologies and Professional Roles. In C. Mellado, L. Hellmueller, & W. Donsbach (Eds.), *Journalistic Role Performance* (pp. 93-107). London: Routledge.

Part II: The Articles

JOURNALISM STUDIES
2022, VOL. 23, NO. 8, 951–973
https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2022.2061574

Images of Transgressions: Visuals as Reconstructed Evidence in Digital Investigative Journalism

Fredrik Bjerknes

Department of Information Science and Media Studies, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway

ABSTRACT

The epistemic authority of journalism has undergone significant theorization and empirical investigations in past years. This article contributes to this growing body of scholarship by analyzing how collected images and videos are used as evidence in 14 visual video investigations by *The New York Times*. A visual discourse analysis following the Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse (SKAD) is conducted to map out how an investigative way of seeing is established by coexisting discursive practices, including narrativization, coding schemes, highlighting techniques, and juxtaposition of video footage in split-screen mode. The article argues that these discursive practices serve as markers of authority which together facilitate a demonstration that recontextualizes collected visuals into evidence, reanimating them as external objects of knowledge that can be interrogated in epistemic struggles concerning the definition of controversial events.

KEYWORDS

Investigative journalism; epistemology; visual storytelling; authority; visual discourse analysis; the Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse (SKAD)

Introduction

The killing of George Floyd, a Ukrainian commercial airplane engulfed in flames, Uyghurs forced to work in Chinese factories; all caught on video and used as evidence by *The New York Times* (NYT) to claim epistemic authority over how events transpired. Without these images of transgressions, our knowledge and certainty of these injustices would have been limited. In a world saturated with cameras and surveillance, visual information can be retrieved of people, places, and incidents that were unthinkable before the digital transformation of the media industry. Visuals captured by non-professionals sit at the heart of this epistemic shift and have been studied in relation to revolutions (Adami 2016), wars (Chouliaraki 2015; Mast and Hanegreefs 2015), nature disasters (Robinson 2009), and terror attacks (Allan 2014; Ibrahim 2014). Others have noted how verification practices (Brandtzaeg, Lüders, and Spangenberg 2016), gatekeeping models (Schwalbe, Silcock, and Candello 2015) and photojournalism (Greenwood and Thomas 2015) are changing as a consequence of citizen journalism and digital witnessing (Allan 2013; Mortensen 2014). However, how these transformations are affecting the different

CONTACT Fredrik Bjerknes fredrik.bjerknes@uib.no

subdisciplines of journalism, including investigative reporting, is a topic that seems to be less covered by the literature.

This paper will explore how collected images and videos are reconstructed and used as evidence in online investigative journalism by studying the work of NYT's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Visual Investigations team* (henceforth the Team). Their methods are inspired by how open-source material and user-generated content are used by scientists, investigators in law and human rights, and the intelligence community. Their reporting covers many different topics from police violence to extrajudicial killings and war crimes, but the one common thread is the *visual*, which is the main source of knowledge, the method of inquiry, and the primary mode of representation. Together with interdisciplinary organizations such as *Bellingcat* and *Forensic Architecture* (Dubberley, Koenig, and Murray 2020; Müller and Wiik 2021; Weizman 2017), the Team of NYT are part of an emerging field that Fuller and Weizman (2021) have theorized as *investigative aesthetics*. Investigative aesthetics involves collecting, interpreting, and noticing unintentional evidence registered in visual, audio, or data files or the material composition of the environment. Collected artifacts are then reconstructed into visual stories where the artifacts' correspondence with each other is highlighted, creating a poly-perspectival assemblage of truth-production (13–25). This paper aims to examine the epistemological and discursive foundation of this type of visual journalism; the forms of knowledge it produces, how it constructs its visual authority and where it intersects with a more traditional investigative epistemology (Ettema and Glasser 1985). The study deploys a visual discourse analysis inspired by The Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse (SKAD) on 14 video investigations produced by the Team in 2020 to examine how images and videos are mobilized, narrativized, interlinked, juxtaposed, and (re)contextualized using different discursive practices to reconstruct them into external objects of knowledge that can be interrogated as evidence in epistemic contests.

I start by explicating how images and videos can be constructed into evidence through the establishment of a professional vision (Goodwin, 1994). I then trace the role of visuals in investigative journalism before discussing the epistemological tensions and aesthetic differences that reside in visuals captured by non-professionals and fixed cameras. Following a presentation of the study's dataset, research question, and methodological approach, an in-depth analysis is conducted. Finally, I sum up the most important takeaways, addresses reservations towards my findings, and make suggestions for further research.

The Construction of Visual Evidence

To understand how images and videos are used as evidence, it is crucial to first address their uniqueness as artifacts. Historically, the notion that still- and moving images show and speak the truth stems from their correspondence to the real (Dufour and Delage 2015). This inherent indexicality is a prerequisite for the cultural status of visuals as truth-telling objects (Newton 2001). Visual meaning is derived from the layers of denotation and connotation. Denotation refers to the indexical bond with people, objects, events, and places represented, while connotation refers to everything that is culturally associated with what is represented, and how it is represented aesthetically (Barthes 1977). This has led scholars to argue that the authority of visuals does not reside in the artifacts themselves, but in the viewer, as an effect or response to the viewing context, suggesting that photographic truth is ambiguous (Phillips 2009; Sturken and Cartwright

2017; Zelizer 2005). Equally important as the image itself is how it is used in narratives and arguments and (re)contextualized by people, professions, and knowledge-producing fields (Bal 2003).

Still- and moving images are not the same and have different ways of creating their "truth effects" (Cubitt 2002). Whereas a photograph is polysemic and needs linguistic messages to anchor, relay, or contextualize its meaning, raw video has kinetic and chronemic qualities that function on their own. This is not to suggest that moving images are unaffected by discursive practices. Their meaning can be affixed by a voiceover, a caption, or a label, too. However, raw video has also temporal, technological, phenomenological, and semiological affordances that combined create an artifact with a narrative structure that on one level speaks for itself (Bock and Schneider 2017).

Although visuals are not objective artifacts, they have been mobilized as such since the dawn of photography. Drawing on Foucault (1977), Tagg (1999), and Sekula (1986) have demonstrated how the photograph has been used to regulate social deviance by surveilling, archiving, and identifying criminals and other outcasts. From the state's point of view, the photograph represented a powerful tool in their regimes of truth precisely because it appeared as incontestable evidence of the real. Yet, photographs and videos have a long and complicated history in the field of law. American judges in the second half of the nineteenth century grouped photographs alongside other visual representations, thereby giving them secondary status as illustrative evidence part of witness testimony, rather than recognizing them as independent proof (Mnookin 1998). This analogy backfired and brought into existence a new epistemic category that strengthened the evidentiary status of maps and diagrams which in turn paved way for a "culture of construction" in the courtroom: "Evidence was now something not only to be found but to be made" (66).

The fragility of visuals as forensic objects and their contingency on context were famously demonstrated in the 1992 Rodney King trial, a pivotal moment in the history of visual evidence (see Fiske 1996; Nichols 1995; Schwartz 2009). King, a black motorist, was pulled over for speeding and beaten by four white LAPD officers. The beating was filmed by George Holiday, a bystander, and used as evidence by both legal teams in court, albeit in opposing narratives and different formats. While the prosecutor played the tape in its entirety without offering an explicit interpretation, thus mistakenly entrusting only its denotative power, the defense decontextualized the tape by abstracting still images from it, cropping, printing, enlarging, and displaying them in front of the jury as well as freeze-framed on a monitor. Furthermore, they marked King's body movements on the printouts, replayed segments, and summoned expert witnesses that gave testimonies that framed King's behavior as aggressive and the policemen's actions as routine responses to this aggressiveness. The defenses' recontextualization of the tape convinced the jury that the beating was reasonable from a professional point of view.

Professional Vision

Goodwin (1994) analyzes the King trial in tandem with an archaeological field excavation and identifies three discursive practices which he argues are key in building and contesting a professional vision: (1) coding schemes, (2) highlighting techniques, and (3) articulations and production of material representations. Coding schemes transform the world into categories and events that are relevant to the work of a profession. Highlighting techniques such as hand gestures, arrows, and drawn lines make some elements more salient than others. While material representations, or what Latour and Woolgar (1986) call *inscriptions,* can "organize phenomena in ways that spoken language cannot – for example, by collecting records of a range of disparate events onto a single visible surface" (Goodwin, 1994, 611). Important inscriptions in the King trial were the printouts and the monitor. Inscriptions are often multi-layered and manufactured through many stages, forming what Latour calls cascades of inscriptions (1986). Their effect, in addition to interlinking and recontextualizing different kinds of knowledge and thereby constricting the room for interpretation, is that each layered inscription strengthens the artifacts' evidentiary weight:

> Although *in principle* any interpretation can be opposed to any text or image, *in practice* this is far from the case: the cost of dissenting increases with (…) each new labeling, each new redrawing (…) Thus, one more inscription (…) to enhance contrast, (…) to decrease background (…) might be enough, all things being equal, to swing the *balance of power* and turn an incredible statement into a credible one (…). (18–19)

Latour calls multilayered inscriptions the staging of an "optical device" that creates a new type of vision and consequently a new phenomenon to look at. Thus, inscriptions can discursively construct new representational objects that both render and expand reality. Goodwin concludes that the framework he draws is generic and pervasive and, therefore, can be used to investigate quite diverse phenomena of social action. The central idea is that a professional vision always is perspectival, lodged within a community of competent practitioners, and unevenly allocated and that different professions – medicine, law, the police, and specific sciences have the power to see, constitute and articulate alternative kinds of events (Goodwin, 1994, 626). Relatedly, to grasp what the world might look like through the professional prism of investigative journalism, I will outline its epistemology, recurring narratives, and different forms of visibilities.

The Epistemology of Investigative Journalism

Investigative reporters seek to expose wrongdoings and transgressions in society that are unknown or hidden from the public. Consequently, their truth claims about events are often more comprehensive, controversial, and more moralistic than in other types of journalism (Ettema and Glasser 1998; Protess, Cook, and Doppelt 1991). Following Park (1940) and Berger and Luckmann (1966), Ettema and Glasser (1985) were the first to sketch the epistemology of investigative journalism, studying how investigative reporters know what they know, and what counts as evidence within their context of justification. This approach to epistemology is sociological, not philosophical, and part of a strand of scholarship within journalism studies that focus on journalism's different forms of knowledge, and how knowledge claims are articulated, implied and justified within news organizations and in news texts (Ekström and Westlund 2019a). The principle of the epistemology of investigative journalism is an ingrained skepticism towards the veracity of knowledge claims in general. Claims are usually cross-verified by checking their correspondence with each other, regardless of their origin and the circumstances surrounding their retrieval. This is different from "daily news journalism" where verification procedures are more random (Godler and Reich 2017). In running news coverage, claims from authoritative sources are often accepted at face value and treated as pre-justified without assessing their truth value: "Daily reporters can merely accept claims as news, whatever their truth may be, investigative reporters, however, must decide what they believe to be the truth" (Ettema and Glasser 1998, 160). This makes investigative reporting essentially a moral enterprise which Ettema and Glasser (1998) argue employs recurring narratives about social injustice in which innocence cannot exist without the antimatter of guilt. While victims and transgressors are frequent figures, the aim is usually to expose the failings of a system, anchoring wrongdoings in larger political and cultural contexts (34). Thus, central to the epistemology of investigative journalism is the ability to interrelate and balance epistemic and moral claims (Ekström and Westlund 2019b). This is usually achieved by evaluating exposed transgressions with established criteria of conduct, such as the law, ethical codes, and expert opinions.

According to Ettema and Glasser (1985), a videotape of someone caught in the act is considered the heaviest kind of proof within the investigative hierarchy of evidence, but this is only touched upon briefly, probably because such footage was so rare in the 1980s. Overall, visual evidence does not have a central place in the literature on investigative journalism. Perhaps not so strange since much of it was written in the early years of the Internet, where today's myriad of visual practices was unthinkable. Another reason could be that investigative reporters most often dig into incidents of the past. Before smartphones, social media, and the democratization of photography, the most common ways to visually show misdeeds were either through reenactments or by framing targets filming them in secret (Bromley 2005). Ekström (2002) notes that rules, routines, and institutionalized epistemic procedures vary according to media context, genre, and program type. In an article about the epistemologies of TV journalism, he argues that presentation and visualization are crucial to investigative journalism on TV and that access to visual material decides what gets investigated (265). Still, he does not provide an elaborate discussion on how visuals may have an evidentiary value beyond their illustrative function.

Traditionally there has been an institutional divide between different forms of filmic narration and ways of using visuals. While TV news has favored diegetic narratives with interviews, declarative voice-overs, and images as illustrations, documentaries have experimented more with mimetic narratives where images are shown without any additional commentary. Documentary scholar Bill Nichols argues that documentaries, like all fact-based discourses, seek to externalize and objectivize evidence "to place it referentially outside the domain of the discourse itself, which then gestures to its location there, beyond and before interpretation" (2016, 99). The image is ideally suited for this purpose because of its indexicality. Visual evidence, then, when used in a filmic narrative is "charged with a double existence: it is part of the discursive chain but also gives the vivid impression of residing external to it" (2016, 99). This externalization process is eased without any temporal constraints. Online newspapers today can present longer videos and combine diegetic and mimetic narration in a hybridized form that differs from ordinary TV journalism (Bock 2012). Furthermore, newspapers such as *The New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* which have embraced investigative aesthetics in their work, do not just use images to investigate stories and visualize facts – they also investigate the image itself, working to uncover facts that are grounded in the visual. This reflexive and critical meta-perspective is partly facilitated by new visualization techniques and flexible forms of interactive storytelling, but the main driving force is that the investigations mainly build on visual material captured by others than the newspapers themselves.

Citizen and Robotic Witnessing

Scholars have noted that visual material captured by citizens, surveillance cameras, and other types of devices have different epistemological underpinnings and aesthetics than visuals made by professionals (Allan and Peters 2015; Wahl-Jorgensen 2015). In user-generated visuals, there is often a noticeable subjectivity present – shaky camera movements, grainy footage, and imperfect framing. While this signals the need for verification, it also gives the footage perceived authenticity and credibility which enable epistemic truth-telling (Williams, Wahl-Jorgensen, and Wardle 2011; Zelizer 2007). Allan (2013) notes that the distinction between truth and truth-claim is a vital one in this regard, given that witnessing appeals to the former while revolving around the latter. "Testimony is no guarantor of truth, but rather a personal attestation to perceived facticity; in other words, to be truthful does not imply possession of Truth" (108). The "truth effects" are different in footage from surveillance cameras, dashboard cameras, and other fixed devices. Although programmed and installed by humans, these cameras appear to be operating on their own representing a form of robot witnessing (Gynnild 2014), producing footage that has an "aesthetics of objectivity" which is culturally considered unmatchable as visual proof (Gates 2013). According to Levin (2002), the rhetorical force of surveillance images lies in their temporal indexicality of always recording, no matter what happens.

Together with big data, digital maps, satellite imagery, and drones (Lewis and Westlund 2015; Parasie 2015; Usher 2020), witness media have transformed journalistic knowledge production, enabling new sensing and sense-making capabilities. While these technologies have the potential to uncover previously uncharted strata in the environment and society, they also pose epistemological and ethical challenges to journalism and its claim to authority. The epistemic authority of journalism, or "the legitimate power to define, describe and explain bounded domains of reality" (Gieryn 1999, 1) is inextricably linked up with journalism's institutionalized procedures as well as the display of these procedures within news texts (Carlson 2017, 18). While there is literature that addresses how collected images and videos can be verified from a practical perspective (e.g., Hahn and Stalph 2018; Higgins 2021; Wardle 2014), less attention has been given to how these new epistemic procedures may be integrated and argued as discursive practices in news texts to articulate and justify knowledge claims visually. Studies that can shed light on this from an analytical perspective seem to be in demand.

Data, Research Question, and Method

The *Visual Investigation team* launched in April 2017 (Jolkovski 2020), only months after an NYT report had concluded that a priority of the newsroom should be making its reporting more visual (Leonhardt, Rudoren, and Galinsky 2017). The Team defines their work as a combination of visual forensics analysis, digital sleuthing, and traditional investigative reporting (Browne, Willis, and Hill 2020b). Their reports are usually presented as standalone web documentaries that mix still images, video footage of various kinds, motion graphics, 3D models, satellite imagery, digital maps, music, and voice-over commentary. All videos are published at NYTimes.com, and some on YouTube. Three award-winning investigations are described in the newest edition of the book *Investigative Journalism* (De Burgh and Lashmar 2021), but Gates (2020) is so far the only scholar who has taken an analytical interest in their work. In an analysis of one investigation from 2018, she argues that the video exemplifies how media forensics have become a product of popular sense-making, suggesting that the investigation combines forensic and journalistic epistemologies in its storytelling. However, she does not engage with any literature on investigative journalism, nor does she discuss how visuals are reconstructed into evidence. Therefore, based upon reviewing existing literature and watching all videos produced by the Team since its foundation, the following research question was developed:

> RQ: How are visual artifacts such as images and videos reconstructed into evidence in NYT's visual investigations from 2020?

The method used for this study was visual discourse analysis (Rose 2016) following the Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse (SKAD). SKAD was developed in the late 1990s by German sociologist Reiner Keller (Keller 2011, 2012; Keller, Hornidge, and Schünemann 2018). The approach has since informed research across the social sciences, including studies of urban sociology (Christmann 2008), online memory practices (Sommer 2012), public debates (Wu 2012), and legislation processes (Stückler 2018). SKAD is not a method, but a research program that offers dynamic tools and guidelines for doing empirical research that must be customized according to the specificity of academic fields and research questions. The theoretical underpinnings of SKAD are Foucault and his concepts of discourses as regimes of knowledge/power (2002) recontextualized within the broader framework of the sociology of knowledge devised by Berger and Luckmann (1966). Following SKAD entails focusing on how knowledge is objectivized and legitimized and how discourses produce their "effects of truth" (Keller, Hornidge, and Schünemann 2018).

According to Foucault, knowledge is always dependent on discursive practices (2002, 201) which SKAD defines as observable and describable typical ways of acting out statement production whose implementation requires interpretive competence and active shaping by social actors (Keller 2011, 55). This is in line with Goodwin's definition which states that

> discursive practices are used by members of a profession to shape events in the domains subject to their professional scrutiny. The shaping process creates the objects of knowledge that become the insignia of a profession's craft: the theories, artifacts, and bodies of expertise that distinguish it from other professions. (Goodwin, 1994, 606)

This SKAD-inspired visual discourse analysis is not a traditional multimodal content analysis with linguistic interests, nor is it a study of how competing ideological discourses may surface in the context of journalism. Rather, it is a sociological analysis of the regularities that characterize visual investigative journalism as institutionalized knowledge, with an emphasis on how epistemic procedures are displayed in visual news content. In other words, the aim is to do sociology *with* the image, studying the practices that produce visibilities and explore how the visual is integrated and reflected across various kinds of epistemic endeavors (Traue, Blanc, and Cambre 2019). In terms of methodological steps, this entailed mapping discursive practices (in the form of recurring statement patterns) across multiple videos to circle in on how different videos were assembled by the very same logic of regulation and formation in the ways they made claims to truth and where they called attention to or at least acknowledged dissent (Rose 2016, 209).

So far, the Team has released more than 70 videos. A preliminary inspection of all videos revealed that some discursive practices for invoking and interrogating the visual as evidence were more prevalent than others, suggesting that it was paramount to analyze a larger sample to map out the different ways knowledge claims could be articulated and implied visually. The 2020-batch emerged as the most consistent and representative as it made use of all the main visualization techniques the Team has developed throughout the years. A limited sample from a given year would be large enough to uncover recurring practices and commonalities across various types of investigations, and small enough to delve deep into each video following the criteria for in-depth analysis in qualitative visual methodologies (Rose 2016). Three videos were exempted because they did not fulfill the criteria of being full-fledged investigations, resulting in a sample of 14 videos with an average playtime of eight minutes. In previous years, the Team has mainly focused on human rights abuse and conflicts abroad. 2020 started similarly with the downing of Ukrainian Flight 752 over Iran. However, during the ongoing pandemic, George Floyd was killed, sparking riots and unrest across the US, making transgressions perpetrated by police at home the Team's focus the rest of the year.

All videos were imported to a database in MAXQDA. The software offers a way of selecting and coding clips and segments, which in turn can be retrieved for comparison and analysis. The coding process was informed, but not deductively guided by existing theory. SKAD, like other qualitative approaches, favors sequential analysis of audiovisual data, a frame-by-frame elaboration of categories that give labels to meaning-making activities (Keller, Hornidge, and Schünemann 2018). Multiple detailed viewings generated a codebook that was revised and expanded upon numerous times. Every single sequence was assigned multiple codes, resulting in some videos having more than a hundred. One set of codes concerned the artifact/source type present (witness video, still image, document, etc.); another set placed the artifact within a narrative structure (mapping where, how, and when they were deployed), a third set coded how artifacts, actors, and events were classified and framed by the voice-over, while the fourth set of codes focused on superimposed storytelling techniques that were used to underscore a truth claim or to add an evidentiary effect (zooming, encircling, split screens, etc.). Although SKAD forms the theoretical baseline of the study, equally important is Goodwin's analytical framework. The concepts that emerged from the empirical material were analyzed in relation to coding schemes, highlighting techniques, and other discursive practices that are key in establishing a professional vision and further merged with similar analytical categories recommended by SKAD for analyzing discursive practices and statement production, such as narrative structures, classification systems, and interpretive frames (Keller, Hornidge, and Schünemann 2018).

In line with SKAD's principles of reflexivity, it is important to state that the analysis was guided by the researcher's hermeneutic point of departure. The study does not argue that the findings pertain to every investigation produced by the Team, or to visual investigations across newsrooms in general. The aim was not to generalize findings in this sense, but rather to generate context-specific conceptualizations (Keller, Hornidge, and

Schünemann 2018, 63) regarding the visual as evidence, which could function as starting points for further empirical explorations into the visualities of investigative journalism.

Analysis: Discursive Practices as Markers of Authority

NYT's visual investigations are overwhelmingly dense with information. Approaching such complex material analytically demands a clearly defined point of entry. Based upon the literary review, the analysis will, therefore, mainly be concerned with how truth claims are established visually by discursive practices such as narrativization, coding schemes, and other forms of articulation and representation.

Narrativization: The Distribution and Organization of Visual Artifacts

The analysis starts with a closer look at the various kinds of visual artifacts used in the investigations, and by mapping out how these artifacts are being deployed in the videos' narrative structure to give them more evidentiary weight. According to SKAD, narrative structures integrate the various statements of discourses into a coherent and communicable form and provide a scheme for the narration with which the discourse can address an audience (Keller, Hornidge, and Schünemann 2018, 34). The following section is not a narrative analysis in the classical sense, but rather an attempt to uncover some regularities concerning when, how, and in what order key clips are being introduced.

Table 1. Most footage used in NYT's visual investigations are collected from open sources.

Date	Dataset: NYT visual investigations 2020/14 in total	Playtime
01-Jan	Ukrainian Flight 752: How a Plane Came Down in 7 Minutes	04:29
02-Feb	How Did Iran's Qassim Suleimani Wield Power? We Tracked the Quds Force Playbook	06:12
16-May	Ahmaud Arbery's Final Minutes: What Videos and 911 Calls Show	07:22
31-May	How George Floyd Was Killed in Police Custody	09:44
04-Jun	The David McAtee Shooting: Did Aggressive Policing Lead to a Fatal Outcome?	04:38
22-Jun	The Killing of Rayshard Brooks: How a 41-Minute Police Encounter Suddenly Turned Fatal	11:06
25-Jun	How The Philadelphia Police Tear-Gassed a Group of Trapped Protesters	10:02
10-Jul	How ICE Helped Spread the Coronavirus	09:56
19-Jul	Wearing a Mask? It May Come from China's Controversial Labor Program	08:32
24-Jul	Videos Show How Federal Officers Escalated Violence in Portland	07:11
20-Sep	How an Oregon Wildfire Became One of the Most Destructive	04:11
13-Oct	A Sudden Spray of Bullets: Reconstructing a US Task Force's Killing of an Antifa Activist	03:43
02-Nov	I Am on Your Side: How the Police Gave Armed Groups a Pass in 2020	08:05
28-Des	How the Police Killed Breonna Taylor	18:03
Visual artefacts		Prevalence
Witness footage		14/14
Still image		14/14
Digital map/satellite imagery		14/14
News footage		13/14
Documents		10/14
Sound clip/911-calls		07/14
Surveillance footage		06/14
Aerial/drone footage		06/14
Text/screenshot		04/14
Footage from state media		03/14
Bodycam footage		02/14
Dashcam footage		02/14
Crime scene photos/footage		01/14
3D-model		01/14

As Table 1 shows, witness videos are the most common type of artifact used by the Team, while still images (often used to identify victims and perpetrators) and digital maps also are key components. Every investigation from 2020 apart from one, contains news footage of some kind. This footage is generally used circumstantially to explain how a concrete transgression fits into a larger cultural and political context, setting up the discursive frames where key clips can be constructed into evidence. The transgressive acts are mostly caught on surveillance footage or by witnesses recording with their cell-phones. This key footage is given evidentiary weight by how and when it is distributed within the narrative structure of the videos. All investigations are presented in a simple narrative with an introduction phase that sets up the analysis, followed by a walkthrough of the collected visual material. Generally, artifacts that serve explicitly as evidentiary objects to lay epistemic claim to a transgression, reemerge numerous times during an investigation. This repetition is key to establishing a professional vision, as a situated way of seeing a phenomenon in a particular way must be learned (Goodwin, 1994). Snippets of key footage are usually teased and explained in the introduction phase, once, twice, or even three times over. As the investigation progresses, key footage is replayed again, at least twice. First, it is played raw in a mimetic narrative, without any additional sound or explanatory commentary, familiarizing the viewer more in-depth with its content, but also demonstrating that NYT has not tampered with the images. And then key footage is replayed again, this time in a diegetic narrative (e.g., Browne and Engelbrecht 2020; Browne and Tiefenthäler 2020; Browne and Xiao 2020; Koettl, Tabrizy, and Xiao 2020). The web video format enables NYT to present events seemingly in real-time, as in the investigation into the murder of George Floyd (Hill, Triebert, and Willis 2020b), emphasizing the artifacts' inherent temporality. But also in key moments, by replaying crucial segments over and over. The Team's combination of these discursive practices strengthens the images' credibility while simultaneously constricting their meaning potential.

Coding Schemes: Classifying and Interpreting the Visual

Arranging, replaying, and dwelling upon certain clips to emphasize their importance, does not turn them into evidence. To serve such a purpose, the images must be classified, interpreted, and worked on (Dufour and Delage 2015). Classifications in the form of coding schemes (Goodwin, 1994) are a highly effective form of social typification processes. According to SKAD, classifications divide the worldly given into entities that provide the basis for their conceptual experience, interpretation, and ways of being dealt with (Keller, Hornidge, and Schünemann 2018, 33).

Naturally, investigating and interpreting police violence and wildfires demands different coding schemes. Still, viewing all 14 investigations together, there are two sets of overarching coding schemes that the Team uses regardless of the topic they are covering. One set pertains to how the journalists classify collected artifacts and one set pertains to the classifications of the depicted events. The latter schemes vary, but there are regularities across the dataset that establish a moral world of transgressions with systemic failures, victims, and perpetrators, similar to the one detailed by Ettema and Glasser (1998). However, these coding schemes are not invented by the journalists but rather derived from established rules for proper conduct. The actual documents where laws or internal regulations are written are usually shown on screen, hence their prevalence as recurring artifacts (Table 1). Key paragraphs are highlighted and read aloud, thereby objectivizing the classification of the uncovered and depicted transgressions, seemingly removing any attached value judgments. Overall, the voice-over commentary is descriptive and neutral, actions are usually not classified as transgressions unless they can be supported by official documents (Browne and Engelbrecht 2020; Hill, Triebert, and Willis 2020b), statements from external experts (Xiao, Willis, and Koettl 2020) or colleagues of the perpetrators (Browne, Singhvi, and Reneau 2020a).

The other set of coding schemes the Team uses has epistemological implications and classifies the various types of artifacts used. In six videos, images are explicitly classified by the voice-over as "evidence". Generally, the word is articulated either at the beginning of an investigation to describe the collected artifacts about to be shown: "We'll walk you through the evidence, minute by minute (…)" (Tiefenthäler, Triebert, and Hurst 2020), or after a damning piece of footage has been presented. For example, when a police officer forgets that his body camera is still on and indirectly admits to a colleague that he knew that Rayshard Brooks (a black man he has just shot twice in the back) was unarmed, Malachy Browne, senior producer of the Team, comments: "This and other evidence will be scrutinized in what has now become a homicide investigation" (Browne and Xiao 2020). The combination of the self-incriminating comment made by the officer, Browne's classification of the clip as evidence, and the surveillance footage of the shooting (having been shown three times over; twice in its entirety), establishes a particular way of seeing and interpreting the depicted events (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Screengrab 1: Coding schemes transform phenomena observed in a specific setting into the objects of knowledge that animate the discourse of a profession (Goodwin, 1994, 606). The screenshot shows surveillance footage and a digital map being classified as evidence in the investigation Ukrainian Flight 752: How a Plane Came Down in 7 Minutes. © 2020 THE NEW YORK TIMES COMPANY.

The reporters also classify collected images and videos further into specific subcategories such as witness videos, surveillance footage, etc. This has at least two epistemic consequences. First of all, it actuates and regulates verification procedures, but it also grants the artifacts an external authenticity beyond that bestowed by the discourse, making their visibilities appear as facts rather than inventions (Nichols 2016, 99). However, this does not mean that what appears to be self-evident footage is accepted as pre-justified knowledge. On the contrary, even the George Floyd video – which other news outlets previously had published without questioning its' veracity, is picked apart, reconstructed, and treated with skepticism which manifests itself explicitly in the different ways clips are geolocated, cross-referenced, and sourced on screen (with photo credits inscribed), but also more implicitly in self-scrutiny and transparency, articulated by the voice-over. The Team states in several investigations that surveillance videos may display the wrong timestamp, that there are gaps in their reconstructions due to missing footage, and that there may still exist unearthed visual artifacts telling a different story (e.g., Browne and Tiefenthäler 2020).

An investigative way of seeing does not only involve chrono- and geolocating, cross-referencing, and retracing how footage emerged on social media, but also investigating the content of the images themselves. In the investigations into Iran's shadow wars (Willis, Koettl, and Tabrizy 2020) and China's labor camps (Xiao, Willis, and Koettl 2020), footage from state television is used as the main source of information. While the images seemingly only contain the official account of events, recontextualized and scrutinized frame by frame, clues and connections are discovered telling a different story (Figure 2).

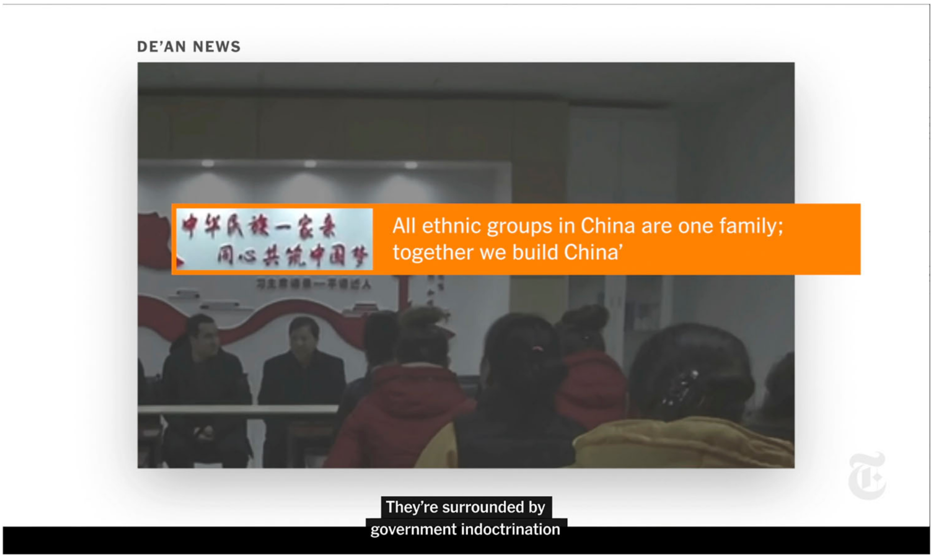

Figure 2. Screengrab 2: According to the Times, this footage from Chinese State Television shows Uighurs, a Muslim ethnic minority, unwillingly participating in assimilation programs. An example of what the Times calls "government indoctrination" is discovered and highlighted in the footage. © 2020 THE NEW YORK TIMES COMPANY.

In footage that is either captured by a victim or by a transgressor, the level of visible recontextualization and reinterpretation is more restrained. In one investigation, a local video activist provides NYT with key footage of an incident where he and other protestors in Philadelphia are trapped and tear-gassed by the police (Koettl, Tabrizy, and Xiao 2020). NYT uses the footage mostly in a mimetic narrative and lets the viewer experience the widespread panic from the perspective of the protesters for almost an entire minute. The clip, which resurfaces again at the end of the investigation, gives a compelling account of enduring what seems like deliberate wrongdoing from the police. Generally, the Team seems reluctant to address any emotions that may arise from looking at these images of transgressions. By focusing on what the footage shows in a purely denotative sense, the affective side is left to work implicitly. Journalists are careful not to overemphasize trauma and pain to create identification and solidarity with those depicted (Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantti 2014). The use of mimetics and the outsourcing of moral judgment enables NYT to keep their professional distance, positioning themselves "close, but not too close" (Silverstone 2004, 444) to the events they are investigating.

Synchronization, Juxtaposition, Inscriptions, and Highlighting Techniques

Another way of reconstructing visual artifacts as evidence, albeit more implicitly, is to reference the epistemic procedures involved in the process of retrieving and analyzing them: "The Times examined witness videos, security footage, police bodycam, and dashcam videos. We synchronized and slowed down those videos so we can see and hear what unfolded" (Browne and Tiefenthäler 2020). Gathering, collecting, analyzing, combing through, examining, breaking down, slowing down, forensically mapping, assembling – all these procedures are mentioned by the voiceover, and most of them are visualized on-screen as discursive practices. In seven investigations, a grid of artifacts is displayed somewhere in the narrative structure, most often in the introduction phase. This grid is essentially a visualization of a familiar trope in investigative journalism; namely that the reporting builds on a vast amount of collected evidence which will only make sense if pieced together as a whole. Such an epistemological jigsaw puzzle would perhaps be more familiar if it were invoked as documents laid systematically out on the floor or as a network map hanging on the wall, but its role as a self-referential authoritative statement pattern within the discourse nevertheless remains the same (Figure 3).

The grid also serves as a starting point for explaining how knowledge claims are verified and justified. In accordance with the epistemology of investigative journalism, collected footage is usually verified in correspondence with each other. In this case by synchronization. The Team uses video editing software and/or manual comparison of details found in the images or in the sound of the footage to piece together the unfolding of events from multiple perspectives subsequently placing corresponding clips on a timeline in the correct order. The footage is then displayed simultaneously in a split-screen mode, showing the same transgression from two, three, or even four different angles. While the grid on the one hand highlights the subjectivity of each video and thus reveals their constructive nature, it also functions as an inscription device that transforms this embodied subjectivity into inter-subjectivity, creating an all-seeing eye that

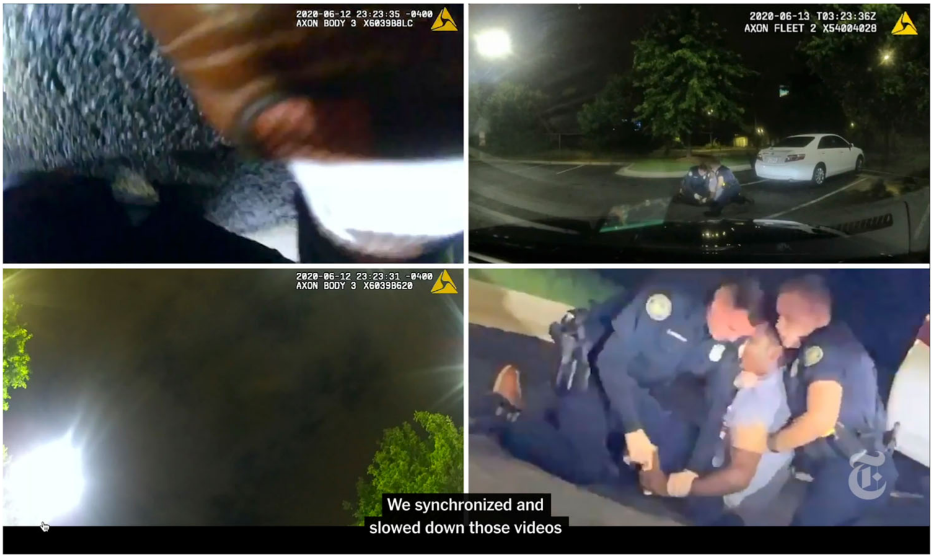

Figure 3. Screengrab 3: Two body cameras attached to the police officers (left-hand side), one dashboard camera and one witness video displayed simultaneously in a grid in the investigation The Killing of Rayshard Brooks: How a 41-Minute Police Encounter Suddenly Turned Fatal. © 2020 THE NEW YORK TIMES COMPANY.

objectifies the knowledge of the events we are seeing (Berger and Luckmann 1966). The split-screen is also used to demonstrate the location of witnesses. A digital map with motion graphics showing camera positions and their cones of vision is displayed on one side, while the geolocated footage runs on the other (Hill, Triebert, and Willis 2020b; Koettl and Botti 2020; Tiefenthäler, Triebert, and Hurst 2020). The maps are perceived as real, not because of their correspondence to reality, but due to their correspondence with the adjacent video footage. Simultaneously, the truth-value of the footage is strengthened vice versa by the very same logic: When NYT pinpoints on maps where the footage was taken, coherence is made between the two artifacts, generating a dynamic where they validate each other (Figure 4).

Noticeable inscriptions (Goodwin, 1994) in the split-screen above are the cones of vision, the map itself, the text above the building, the camera devices, the street names, the greyscale filter, the timestamp of the surveillance video, and the NYT logo. These cascades of inscriptions (Latour 1986) increase the artifacts' evidentiary weight while simultaneously discursively constructing an optical device that synthesizes multiple forms of evidence, putting the viewer above and at the scene at the same time. By combining the act of both "being there" and witnessing from afar, a form of hyper-aesthetics arises with an inherent "interlinkedness" that mutates and becomes reflexive (Fuller and Weizman 2021, 57). The split-screen mode represents a repeated inscription device within the discourse. It is a form of evidence that goes beyond the visual, with a logic that is based on the epistemological principles of cross-verification.

Figure 4. Screengrab 4: A juxtaposed digital map with superimposed inscriptions and video footage from the investigation The David McAtee Shooting: Did Aggressive Policing Lead to a Fatal Outcome. © 2020 THE NEW YORK TIMES COMPANY.

Other recurring discursive practices instrumental in NYT's professional vision are so obvious and simple that they are hardly noticed. When footage of crucial events is replayed, images are sometimes either slowed down or frozen. In addition, the camera may also zoom in on important elements and encircle them. Or the image itself may be cropped on-screen so that what remains displayed is the element that NYT wants the viewer to notice (Cooper, Hill, and Hurst 2020; Hill, Tiefenthäler, and Browne 2020a; Willis, Koettl, and Tabrizy 2020). Again, the web video format's flexibility is demonstrated as it enables NYT to toggle seamlessly between still- and moving images, creating a hybridization of the opposing strategies in the Rodney King trial. By decontextualizing video footage into still images, the work of the viewer is radically changed as it enables and encourages a close reading, freezing crucial moments in time, before NYT recontextualizes the images yet again back to their original temporal state. To help the viewer even further, highlighting techniques are added whose epistemological purpose is to make certain objects, actions, and actors more salient. Guns are typically highlighted, as well as patches and other insignias on clothes and uniforms. Sometimes the victim is singled out against a chaotic background, other times the aggressors are brought into focus. In isolation, these highlighting techniques in themselves have little authoritative effect, but when they are combined in an active interplay between coding schemes, other forms of discursive practices, and the domain of scrutiny to which they all are being simultaneously applied, "they mutually enhance each other, creating a demonstration that is greater than the sum of its part" (Goodwin 1994, 620).

On the next pages are four different highlighting techniques frequently deployed by the Team in their visual investigations in 2020 (Figures 5–8).

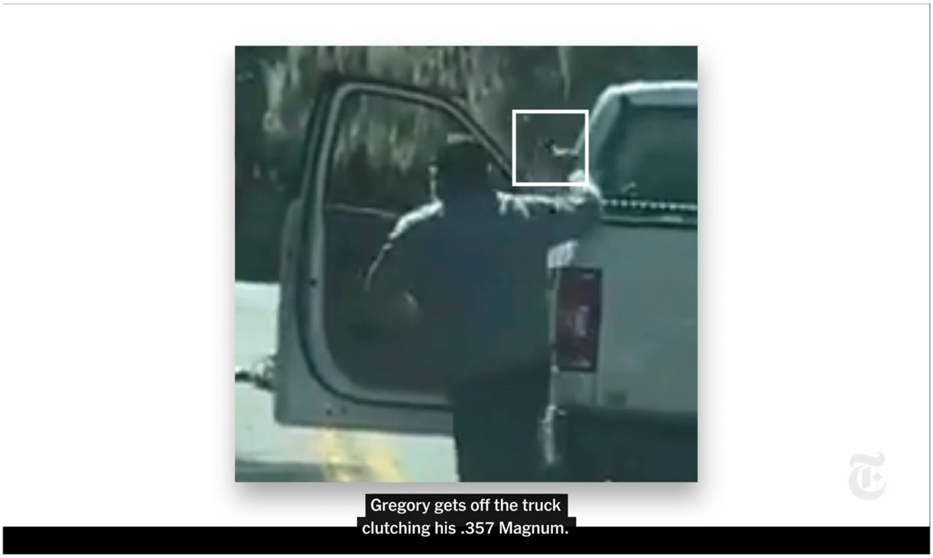

Figure 5. Screengrab 5: Footage is stopped, and a gun is highlighted in Ahmaud Arbery's Final Minutes: What Videos and 911 Calls Show. © 2020 THE NEW YORK TIMES COMPANY.

Figure 6. Screengrab 6: A weapon is singled out and the background desaturated in How Did Iran's Qassim Suleimani Wield Power? We Tracked the Quds Force Playbook. © 2020 THE NEW YORK TIMES COMPANY.

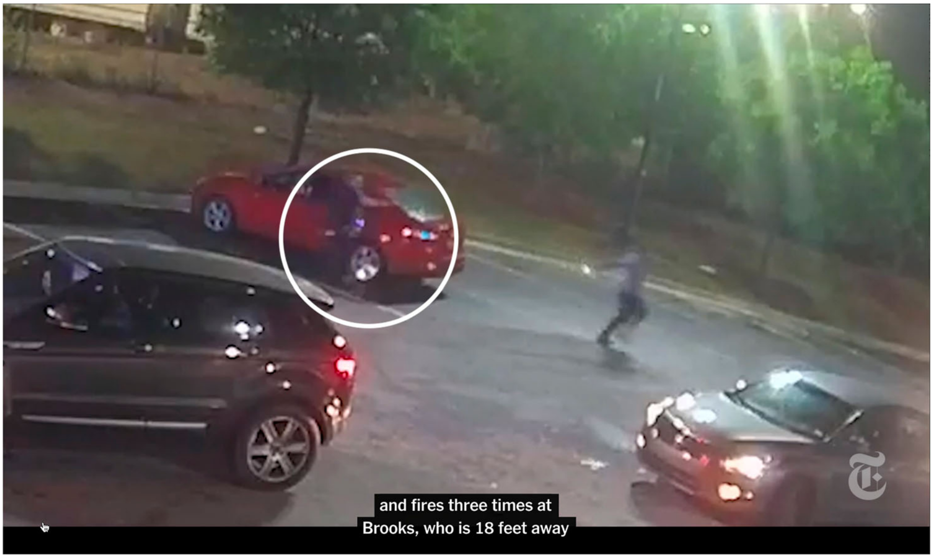

Figure 7. Screengrab 7: A police officer is encircled while drawing his gun shooting Rayshard Brooks in The Killing of Rayshard Brooks: How a 41-Minute Police Encounter Suddenly Turned Fatal. © 2020 THE NEW YORK TIMES COMPANY.

Figure 8. Screengrab 8: The four officers involved in the murder of George Floyd are made more salient using multiple highlighting techniques in How George Floyd Was Killed in Police Custody. © 2020 THE NEW YORK TIMES COMPANY.

Discussion and Conclusions

In this study, I have mapped some of the most prominent discursive practices used by NYT to establish an investigative way of seeing events. In their 2020-videos, the *Visual Investigations team* uses two overarching coding schemes. Together they construct a multidimensional discursive framework with epistemological and moral implications that classifies and interprets collected artifacts and depicted events. The Team also replays key footage and uses highlighting techniques such as zooming, cropping, and encircling to call attention to indexical elements in the images, further shaping the viewer's perception of important moments and crucial details. However, equally important as the content of collected singular artifacts is the relations between them. Inscriptions in the form of split screens and grids are used to interlink visuals that otherwise would be difficult to see simultaneously, such as witness videos filmed in different locations. Taken together these discursive practices serve as markers of authority that externalize and reconstruct collected images and videos into evidence of moral and legal transgressions. The authority of the Team's investigative vision is discursive, relational, and a product of the sociopolitical and historical context in which it is embedded (Canella 2021). The fact that it is NYT – one of the world's most legendary and trustworthy newspapers, that claim epistemic authority over these events is thus of course not without significance.

This study contributes mainly to two strands of scholarship within journalism studies. The first is journalism as witnessing (Ashuri and Pinchevski 2009; Pantti 2020). When witness media is used in investigative journalism, indexical temporality and correspondence between artifacts are highlighted, while the affective is left to work implicitly. *Investigative aesthetics* enable new ways of showing and verifying witness media, mapping subjective truth-claims poly-perspectival (Fuller and Weizman 2021), thereby overcoming many of the epistemological tensions that are associated with singular citizen-generated visuals in existing literature (Allan and Peters 2015). In the longer run, these visual forms of cross-verification can have an impact on how witness media is displayed in other forms of journalism as well, especially when reporters are physically prevented from being present on the ground.

The study also contributes to the literature on the epistemologies of digital journalism (Carlson 2020; Ekström and Westlund 2019a) by bringing attention to how images and videos are used and constructed as evidentiary objects in online investigative journalism. Contrary to what was the standard in the mid-1980s (Ettema and Glasser 1985), the findings indicate that visual knowledge is treated as any other type of knowledge within the investigative hierarchy of evidence. Even though a video of someone performing a transgression may look like incontestable proof, it still needs to be weighed, analyzed, and verified in relation to other knowledge claims stemming from the same incident to qualify as a justified belief and serve as evidence.

Lastly, this study has introduced and combined the Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse (SKAD) (Keller, Hornidge, and Schünemann 2018) with the analytical framework of Goodwin's (1994) professional vision as a novel approach for analyzing visual journalism. SKAD has proven especially fitting for several reasons. First, the approach acknowledges visuals as empirical data on the same level as other textual forms. Second, SKAD comes with an adjustable toolbox for analyzing discursive practices that seems especially relevant for researchers that conceptualize journalism as knowledge production. Third, by viewing discourse as a heuristic device for regulating statements, SKAD can relate the visual and visual practices to greater theories of knowledge and other stocks of knowledge, thereby preventing *visual essentialism*, a term coined by Bal (2003) to describe when visuals are deprived of relevant contexts, proclaimed pure and pinned against other modes of representation in a hierarchy of primacy.

Despite SKAD's flexibility, there are some noticeable disadvantages with the macro-perspective it establishes: Its sociology of knowledge-based terminology, level of abstraction, and focus on discursive regularities can complicate existing vocabulary, take lesser important artifacts for granted, and overlook non-recurring practices, thereby neglecting knowledge that stakeholders may hold as important. Another shortcoming is that the study has focused mostly on NYT's way of seeing while paying less attention to other competing visions. Further research should choose different sample strategies to investigate epistemic struggles where conflicting knowledge stocks and ways of seeing are equally represented. Researchers should also pay more attention to how emerging visual practices are carried out in newsrooms: How are open-source intelligence techniques being combined with traditional journalistic procedures? How can journalists know that they have collected all the crucial evidence about an incident? And which artifacts do not make it into the final reporting and why? Ethnographic research seems necessary to explore these questions further.

Finally, this has been a study first and foremost of the visibilities of investigative journalism, ignoring largely the parts that cannot be depicted. Further studies should also try to assess its invisibilities, namely what is hidden or displayed as compensatory artifacts. Schmid (2012) suggests a simple, but effective analytical move in this regard: We need to ask which specific absence that generates the origin of a specific presence. Compensatory elements such as the 3D model in the investigation into the killing of Breonna Taylor and the animation superimposed on the maps in the investigations into the killings of Ahmaud Arbery and Michael Reinoehl are examples of inscription devices that function as stand-ins for missing footage. These objects and their epistemological function should be explored and theorized more in-depth in future studies.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the reviewers and my supervisors for their feedback and comments. Thanks also to NYT for letting me use eight screenshots in my article.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

References

Adami, E. 2016. "How Do You Watch a Revolution? Notes From the 21st Century." *Journal of Visual Culture* 15 (1): 69–84.

Allan, S. 2013. *Citizen Witnessing: Revisioning Journalism in Times of Crisis*. Oxford: Polity Press.

Allan, S. 2014. "Witnessing in Crisis: Photo-Reportage of Terror Attacks in Boston and London." *Media, War & Conflict* 7 (2): 133–151.

Allan, S., and C. Peters. 2015. “Visual Truths of Citizen Reportage: Four Research Problematics.” *Information, Communication & Society* 18 (11): 1348–1361.
Andén-Papadopoulos, K., and M. Pantti. 2014. *Amateur Images and Global News*. Bristol: Intellect Books.
Ashuri, T., and A. Pinchevski. 2009. “Witnessing as a Field.” In *Media Witnessing: Testimony in the Age of Mass Communication*, edited by P. Frosh, and A. Pinchevski, 133–157. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Bal, M. 2003. “Visual Essentialism and the Object of Visual Culture.” *Journal of Visual Culture* 2 (1): 5–32.
Barthes, R. 1977. *Rhetoric of the Image. Image Music Text*. New York: Hill and Wang.
Berger, P. L., and T. Luckmann. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Anchor Books.
Bock, M. A. 2012. “Newspaper Journalism and Video: Motion, Sound, and New Narratives.” *New Media & Society* 14 (4): 600–616.
Bock, M. A., and D. A. Schneider. 2017. “The Voice of Lived Experience: Mobile Video Narratives in the Courtroom.” *Information, Communication & Society* 20 (3): 335–350.
Brandtzaeg, P. B., M. Lüders, J. Spangenberg. 2016. “Emerging Journalistic Verification Practices Concerning Social Media.” *Journalism Practice* 10 (3): 323–342.
Bromley, M. 2005. “Subterfuge as Public Service: Investigative Journalism as Idealized Journalism.” In *Journalism: Critical Issues*, edited by S. Allan, 313–327. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
Browne, M., and C. Engelbrecht. 2020. “The David McAtee Shooting: Did Aggressive Policing Lead to a Fatal Outcome?” *The New York Times*.
Browne, M., A. Singhvi, and N. Reneau. 2020a. “How the Police Killed Breonna Taylor.” *The New York Times*.
Browne, M., and A. Tiefenthäler. 2020. “Ahmaud Arbery’s Final Minutes: What Videos and 911 Calls Show.” *The New York Times*.
Browne, M., H. Willis, and E. Hill. 2020b. “How The Times Makes Visual Investigations.” *YouTube*.
Browne, M., and M. Xiao. 2020. “The Killing of Rayshard Brooks: How a 41-Minute Police Encounter Suddenly Turned Fatal.” *The New York Times*.
Canella, G. 2021. “Journalistic Power: Constructing the “Truth” and the Economics of Objectivity.” *Journalism Practice*, 1–17. doi:10.1080/17512786.2021.1914708.
Carlson, M. 2017. *Journalistic Authority: Legitimating News in the Digital Era*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
Carlson, M. 2020. “Journalistic Epistemology and Digital News Circulation: Infrastructure, Circulation Practices, and Epistemic Contests.” *New Media & Society* 22 (2): 230–246.
Chouliaraki, L. 2015. “Digital Witnessing in War Journalism: The Case of Post-Arab Spring Conflicts.” *Popular Communication* 13 (2): 105–119.
Christmann, G. B. 2008. “The Power of Photographs of Buildings in the Dresden Urban Discourse. Towards a Visual Discourse Analysis.” *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 9 (3). doi:10.17169/fqs-9.3.1163.
Cooper, S., E. Hill, and W. Hurst. 2020. “I Am On Your Side: How the Police Gave Armed Groups a Pass in 2020.” *The New York Times*.
Cubitt, S. 2002. “Visual and Audiovisual: From Image to Moving Image.” *Journal of VCculture* 1 (3): 359–368.
De Burgh, H., and P. Lashmar. 2021. *Investigative Journalism*. London: Routledge.
Dubberley, S., A. Koenig, and D. Murray. 2020. *Digital Witness: Using Open Source Information for Human Rights Investigation, Documentation, and Accountability*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Dufour, D., and C. Delage. 2015. *Images of Conviction: The Construction of Visual Evidence*. Paris: Le Bal.
Ekström, M. 2002. “Epistemologies of TV Journalism: A Theoretical Framework.” *Journalism* 3 (3): 259–282.
Ekström, M., and O. Westlund. 2019a. “The Dislocation of News Journalism: A Conceptual Framework for the Study of Epistemologies of Digital Journalism.” *Media and Communication* 7 (1): 259–270.

Ekström, M., and O. Westlund. 2019b. "Epistemology and Journalism." In *Oxford Encyclopedia of Journalism Studies*, edited by Henrik Örnebring. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ettema, J. S., and T. L. Glasser. 1985. "On the Epistemology of Investigative Journalism." *Communication* 8 (2): 183–206.

Ettema, J. S., and T. L. Glasser. 1998. *Custodians of Conscience: Investigative Journalism and Public Virtue*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Fiske, J. 1996. *Media Matters: Race & Gender in US Politics*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Foucault, M. 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Pantheon.

Foucault, M. 2002. *Archaeology of Knowledge*. New York: Routledge.

Fuller, M., and E. Weizman. 2021. *Investigative Aesthetics: Conflicts and Commons in the Politics of Truth*. London: Verso.

Gates, K. 2013. "The Cultural Labor of Surveillance: Video Forensics, Computational Objectivity, and the Production of Visual Evidence." *Social Semiotics* 23 (2): 242–260.

Gates, K. 2020. "Media Evidence and Forensic Journalism." *Surveillance & Society* 18 (3): 403–408.

Gieryn, T. F. 1999. *Cultural Boundaries of Science: Credibility on the Line*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Godler, Y., and Z. Reich. 2017. "Journalistic Evidence: Cross-Verification as a Constituent of Mediated Knowledge." *Journalism* 18 (5): 558–574.

Goodwin, C. 1994. "Professional Vision." *American Anthropologist* 96 (3): 606–633.

Greenwood, K., and R. J. Thomas. 2015. "Locating the Journalism in Citizen Photojournalism: The Use and Content of Citizen-Generated Imagery." *Digital Journalism* 3 (4): 615–633.

Gynnild, A. 2014. "The Robot Eye Witness: Extending Visual Journalism Through Drone Surveillance." *Digital Journalism* 2 (3): 334–343.

Hahn, O., and F. Stalph. 2018. *Digital Investigative Journalism*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Higgins, E. 2021. *We Are Bellingcat*. London: Bloomsbury.

Hill, E., A. Tiefenthäler, and M. Browne. 2020a. "Videos Show How Federal Officers Escalated Violence in Portland." *The New York Times*.

Hill, E., C. Triebert, and H. Willis. 2020b. "How George Floyd Was Killed in Police Custody." *The New York Times*.

Ibrahim, Y. 2014. "Social Media and the Mumbai Terror Attack." In *Citizen Journalism: Global Perspectives*, edited by E. Thorsen, and S. Allan, 15–26. New York: Peter Lang.

Jolkovski, A. 2020. "NY Times' Pioneering Visual Investigations: Behind the Scenes." *WAN-IFRA*.

Keller, R. 2011. "The Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse (SKAD)." *Human Studies* 34 (1): 43.

Keller, R. 2012. "Entering Discourses: A New Agenda for Qualitative Research and the Sociology of Knowledge." *Qualitative Sociology Review* 8 (2): 23–56.

Keller, R., A.-K. Hornidge, and W. J. Schünemann. 2018. *The Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse: Investigating the Politics of Knowledge and Meaning-Making*. London: Routledge.

Koettl, C., and D. Botti. 2020. "How an Oregon Wildfire Became One of the Most Destructive." *The New York Times*.

Koettl, C., N. Tabrizy, and M. Xiao. 2020. "How the Philadelphia Police Tear-Gassed a Group of Trapped Protesters." *The New York Times*.

Latour, B. 1986. "Visualization and Cognition." *Knowledge and Society* 6 (6): 1–40.

Latour, B., and S. Woolgar. 1986. *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Leonhardt, D., J. Rudoren, and J. Galinsky. 2017. *Journalism That Stands Apart*. https://www.nytimes.com/projects/2020-report/index.html.

Levin, T. Y. 2002. "Rhetoric of the Temporal Index: Surveillant Narration and the Cinema of "Real Time"." In *Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother*, edited by Thomas Y. Levin, Ursula Frohne, and Peter Weibel, 578–593. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Lewis, S. C., and O. Westlund. 2015. "Big Data and Journalism: Epistemology, Expertise, Economics, and Ethics." *Digital Journalism* 3 (3): 447–466.

Mast, J., and S. Hanegreefs. 2015. "When News Media Turn to Citizen-Generated Images of War: Transparency and Graphicness in the Visual Coverage of the Syrian Conflict." *Digital Journalism* 3 (4): 594–614.
Mnookin, J. L. 1998. "The Image of Truth: Photographic Evidence and the Power of Analogy." *Yale JL & Human* 10: 1.
Mortensen, M. 2014. *Journalism and Eyewitness Images: Digital Media, Participation, and Conflict*. London: Routledge.
Müller, N. C., and J. Wiik. 2021. "From Gatekeeper to Gate-Opener: Open-Source Spaces in Investigative Journalism." *Journalism Practice*, 1–20.
Newton, J. 2001. *The Burden of Visual Truth: The Role of Photojournalism in Mediating Reality*. New York: Routledge.
Nichols, B. 1995. *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Nichols, B. 2016. *Speaking Truths With Film: Evidence, Ethics, Politics in Documentary*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Pantti, M. 2020. "Journalism and Witnessing." In *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*, edited by K. Wahl-Jorgensen, and T. Hanitzsch, 151–164. London: Routledge.
Parasie, S. 2015. "Data-Driven Revelation? Epistemological Tensions in Investigative Journalism in the Age of "Big Data"." *Digital Journalism* 3 (3): 364–380.
Park, R. E. 1940. "News as a Form of Knowledge: A Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge." *American Journal of Sociology* 45 (5): 669–686.
Phillips, D. 2009. "Actuality and Affect in Documentary Photography." In *Using Visual Evidence*, edited by R. Howells, and R. Matson, 55–77. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
Protess, D. L., F. L. Cook, and J. Doppelt. 1991. *The Journalism of Outrage: Investigative Reporting and Agenda Building in America*. New York: Guilford Press.
Robinson, S. 2009. "If You Had Been With Us: Mainstream Press and Citizen Journalists Jockey for Authority Over the Collective Memory of Hurricane Katrina." *New Media & Society* 11 (5): 795–814.
Rose, G. 2016. *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching With Visual Materials*. London: Sage.
Schmid, A. 2012. "Bridging the Gap: Image, Discourse, and Beyond-Towards a Critical Theory of Visual Representation." *Qualitative Sociology Review* 8: 2.
Schwalbe, C. B., B. W. Silcock, and E. Candello. 2015. "Gatecheckers at the Visual News Stream: A New Model for Classic Gatekeeping Theory." *Journalism Practice* 9 (4): 465–483.
Schwartz, L.-G. 2009. *Mechanical Witness: A History of Motion Picture Evidence in US Courts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Sekula, A. 1986. "The Body and the Archive." *October* 39: 3–64.
Silverstone, R. 2004. "Regulation, Media Literacy and Media Civics." *Media, Culture & Society* 26 (3): 440–449.
Sommer, V. 2012. "The Online Discourse on the Demjanjuk Trial: New Memory Practices on the World Wide Web?" *Journal for Communication Studies* 5: 10.
Stückler, A. 2018. "Legislation and Discourse: Research on the Making of Law by Means of Discourse Analysis." In *The Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse: Investigating the Politics of Knowledge and Meaning-Making*, edited by R. Keller, A.-K. Hornidge, and W. J. Schünemann, 112–132. London: Routledge.
Sturken, M., and L. Cartwright. 2017. *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Tagg, J. 1999. "Evidence, Truth and Order: A Means of Surveillance." In *Visual Culture: The Reader*, edited by S. Hall, and J. Evans, 244–273. London: Sage.
Tiefenthäler, A., C. Triebert, and W. Hurst. 2020. "Ukrainian Flight 752: How a Plane Came Down in 7 Minutes." *The New York Times*.
Traue, B., M. Blanc, and C. Cambre. 2019. "Visibilities and Visual Discourses: Rethinking the Social with The Image." *Qualitative Inquiry* 25 (4): 327–337.
Usher, N. 2020. "News Cartography and Epistemic Authority in the Era of Big Data: Journalists as Map-Makers, Map-Users, and Map-Subjects." *New Media & Society* 22 (2): 247–263.

Wahl-Jorgensen, K. 2015. “Resisting Epistemologies of User-Generated Content? Cooptation, Segregation and the Boundaries of Journalism.” In *Boundaries of Journalism: Professionalism, Practices and Participation*, edited by M. Carlson, and S. C. Lewis, 169–185. London: Routledge.
Wardle, C. 2014. “Verifying User-Generated Content.” In *Verification Handbook: A Definitive Guide to Verifying Digital Content for Emergency Coverage*, edited by C. Silverman, 24–33. Maastricht: European Journalism Centre.
Weizman, E. 2017. *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability*. New York: MIT Press.
Williams, A., K. Wahl-Jorgensen, and C. Wardle. 2011. “More Real and Less Packaged: Audience Discourse on Amateur News Content and Its Effects On Journalism Practice.” In *Amateur Images and Global News*, edited by K. Andén-Papadopoulos, and M. Pantti, 195–209. Bristol: Intellect Books.
Willis, H., C. Koettl, and N. Tabrizy. 2020. “How Did Iran’s Qassim Suleimani Wield Power? We Tracked the Quds Force Playbook.” *The New York Times*.
Wu, A. X. 2012. “Hail the Independent Thinker: The Emergence of Public Debate Culture on the Chinese Internet.” *International Journal of Communication* 6: 2220–2244.
Xiao, M., H. Willis, and C. Koettl. 2020. “Wearing a Mask? It May Come From China’s Controversial Labor Program.” *The New York Times*.
Zelizer, B. 2005. “Journalism Through the Camera’s Eye.” In *Journalism: Critical Issues*, edited by S. Allan, 167–176. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
Zelizer, B. 2007. “On “Having Been There”:“Eyewitnessing” as a Journalistic Key Word.” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 24 (5): 408–428.

Graphic design: Communication Division, UiB / Print: Skipnes Kommunikasjon AS

uib.no

ISBN: 9788230847084 (print)
9788230864975 (PDF)