

Final Report to the Helsingin Sanomat Foundation

The mobile challenges of data journalism – research and development project (MoDaJo)

Mobile media has revolutionized how we consume news. Thus, this project focused on the new challenges and opportunities smartphones have created for journalism practice based on big data sets, in other words, for data journalism.

The first section of the project centred on interviewing Nordic data journalism researchers concerning these new challenges. The second section, which was based mainly on interviews with Nordic data journalism educators, concentrated on the educational challenges of data journalism in Finland.

The research and development project was a joint venture between the Department of Language and Communication Studies, University of Jyväskylä, and Tampere University's Research Centre for Journalism, Media and Communication (COMET). This project lasted from the beginning of 2016 and until the end of September 2018.

The primary research results are surprising. Based on almost 40 interviews, the study revealed that Nordic data journalism practices have changed very little despite mobile challenges. Furthermore, mobile data journalism does not yet seem to exist as a special sub-genre of data journalism. For example, at the annual Nordic Data Journalism conferences, only once, in the year 2016, was there a special mobile data journalism award category specifically focusing on smaller screens. It seems that even if smartphones are currently the main devices on which we consume news, newsrooms have not yet properly adjusted their desktop-driven work practices to the mobile news era. Actually, the smaller screen size irritated many data journalists, because they were forced to simplify their stories by using fewer illustrations and graphics, as well as less interactivity.

The education module of the project consisted of several sub-tasks. It not only produced scholarly research on data journalism education, but it also tested data journalism education modules in practice. As an end product, it also published a website that could be used as an effective introductory online course to data journalism (<https://research.uta.fi/datajournalismi/>). The website offers basic information about data journalism through short videos. It also includes links to relevant online materials useful for independent study by anyone interested in the topic. And so, the website functions as a simple first step to understanding the practices of data journalism in Finland.

The backbone of the MoDaJo project work was the annual Nordic Data Journalism conferences held from 2016–2018. These events, which occur every year in a different Nordic country ([Helsinki 2016](#), [Odense 2017](#) and [Stockholm 2018](#)) were used both for data gathering and disseminating/discussing the early results of the project. For example, in Helsinki, the Academic Pre-Conference, which included 18 papers and over 120 participants, was organized by MoDaJo researchers.

The project's researchers also gave a total of six scientific presentations at various international and national conferences, and the academic dissemination phase of the results is still in progress. In addition, the project has created a global community of data journalism researchers via a [Facebook group](#), which had 768 members at the end of September 2018.

On behalf of the research group,

Sincerely,

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