

Navigating the Age of Doubt

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Journalism and AI in an age of doubt

*This article is based on part of my contribution to the Athens **IMEdD International Journalism Forum** session on 'Navigating the Age of Doubt'*

The age of doubt is a wonderful opportunity for journalism because I can tell you that if you lived in an age of certainty, you would be very bored and you would be probably living in a totalitarian regime. People in the Global South are quite used to this idea of being battered all the time because you're a journalist and being under-resourced as a journalist. There's a lot that the rest of the world can learn from those experiences. There is a kind of paradox of power at the moment for journalism which is that the ability to do individual acts of journalism has never been more extraordinary. I know that because I used to work as a journalist for 20 years back in the analogue era. We were so constrained, so limited by the technology then. As a sector, we have lost our institutional might. And I actually think that's quite a good thing in some ways.



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We have got to think of much more networked, much more collaborative ways of working. We mustn't assume that we know better. We mustn't assume that we can speak for the people when the people can speak for themselves. We have to think quite differently about our roles as say. coordinators or curators but also as experts, as people who are passionate about finding out things, who are passionate about trying to understand why there are conflicts, for example. But I don't think journalism's job is to somehow cure the ills of the world, to solve polarization, even to stop conflict as such. I think we got to be brutally realistic about the limits of journalism. We do have skills and we are adopting better ways of working, but we certainly can't do it alone.

I want to turn quickly to AI because that's what I've been working on the last decade. We work with thousands of journalists around the world, especially in the Global South. And when you work with those people, it's inspirational. It's impressive because they are finding ways, often in very niche ways, often at hyperlocal levels or specialist or mission driven around a particular topic or a particular community. They are finding ways to do their journalism in very innovative ways and they're doing it in very audience centred ways. So what is AI to them? Is it an existential threat? Well, it will take away attention. It will provide competition. It will be used by horrible people to do a load of stupid and bad journalism as well. But please go to our [LSE JournalismAI Innovation Challenge website](#). Look at the extraordinary things that the people we support are doing. We're hoping that other people will follow in their pathways.

It's not just about the tech. Those pioneering news organisations use the AI tech to supplement their work. In a world where AI for example becomes more important then of course the bit that's

going to make you stand out is your human values, your human skills, your human connectivity to the other humans in the real world. My question is do we as journalists have the skills and the ability to do that, to make that leap?

This article by Professor Charlie Beckett is his view, not that of the LSE or the JournalismAI project. You can see a recording of that session here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZKHLvUSIEs>. Check out the Innovation Challenge here: <https://www.journalismai.info/programmes/innovation>

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