

The Power of Investigation: Truth-seeking on an International Battleground (guest blog)

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[Diving into Danger](#) tells the story of men from the Mosquito Coast of Honduras who dive hundreds of meters below the sea, risking paralysis and death to catch lobsters that are then consumed at dining tables in the U.S and Europe. [Sex, Lies and Black Magic](#) examines the phenomena of human trafficking via the journey of a young woman from a village in Nigeria to a brothel in Italy. They are two examples of the work of Channel 4 reporter Jenny Kleeman's attempt to make the Unreported World, reported.

Polis Summer School student Maddison Sawle reports on Jenny Kleeman's talk at LSE.

'Ten years ago it wouldn't have been possible for us to do these stories' says [Jenny Kleeman](#). She is referring to the enabling role, that globalization has played in giving journalists like her access to vast subject matter for potential stories. She

cites the [New York Times](#), [Twitter](#), blogs, and photo essays as sources from which stories are plucked.

Kleeman said advances in technology have meant that documentaries can be made with fewer people and that it's relatively easier to access stories in difficult conditions with a smaller crew.

But she also recognized the downsides of the new media landscape that journalists are operating in, where [budgets have been cut, time constraints heightened, and staff downsized](#).

Despite big changes in the way media operates today, the foundations of journalism are still fundamentally important and with the existence of a global audience accuracy she said 'becomes even more important'. As do complex ethical considerations foremost of which is how to protect the safety of the people who agree to be involved in the films, whether direct subjects or 'fixers'. These people are crucial to the films, often putting themselves at grave risk to be involved in telling a story.

Unique Ethics

Kleeman's work shows how the medium of television is a particularly distinct form of communication and how that presents a unique series of ethical and production challenges for international journalism. As such stories are weighed up based on consideration of what will work for that medium, how the audience will relate to a story. Within that, she said there was also an emphasis on picking and following characters to reduce distance between the audience and the subject. The imperative being to shine light on what is happening in communities abroad without making victims of foreign subjects, further distancing them from a Western viewing audience.

Often finding herself as an observer of people suffering in dire situations, she addressed the dilemma surrounding the role of the western journalist as 'helper'. She emphasized a 'bigger picture' view based on the assertion that interfering isn't always viable or the best way to help and doing so can sometimes do more harm than good. Similarly, she spoke of the challenge of keeping her own emotions and personal views in check, saying 'actuality is

the best way to make a point. Giving people the means to see and letting them make up their own minds.’

Different Styles

She openly acknowledged how the aims of this style of journalism differ to that of say the [BBC](#) whose journalism is based upon trying to uphold a balance between the commandments of fairness and impartiality. For her ‘fairness is the aim not necessarily impartiality.’

With much attention being focused recently on [the risks journalists are taking to get stories](#), particularly in the wake of attacks on several female journalists and the death of respected war journalist Marie Colvin she talked of her sometimes-frustrating often-peculiar experience as a female journalist asking difficult questions. She spoke of the advantages of being a female journalist – the way in which being female allows her to access subjects, and negotiate space in tough journalistic territory in a way that a man couldn’t.

In a time of upheaval and cynicism about the health and role of the media in society, Jenny Kleeman’s work shines as an important example of journalism that is tremendously worthwhile and wholly in the public interest.

This article by Maddison Sawle, a grad student at The University of Western Australia

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