



Center for International Media Ethics  
*Asserting the role of journalists in shaping society*

[www.cimethics.org](http://www.cimethics.org)      [info@cimethics.org](mailto:info@cimethics.org)

## **Journalism and the Growth of Civilization**

Melisande Middleton  
CIME Board

January 2010

The role of responsible reporting in creating demand has a lot to do with how the news feeds into economic growth processes, relating to Paul Romer's work on New (or endogenous) Growth Theory. This theory articulates how knowledge input (e.g. creativity through innovation and ideas) is a key factor in sustaining growth. In other words, new ideas that are constantly created, for example via Research & Development as well as via other less formal initiatives, are what allow a society to improve its socioeconomic and technological levels.

I would point out that journalism participates actively in this growth model by circulating these ideas, communicating knowledge all the time and providing the medium for many information flows. If journalists choose to report on topics that reinforce this role of the media in economic (or social) development, then demand increases thanks to the value of the content – as one observes with any form of business or finance journalism. One could even look at how journalism feeds into information flows in Romer's new concept of Charter Cities.

The media certainly has a role to play in the way that knowledge flows are affecting growth. Given the impact of reporting on socio-economic development and growth, a journalist may recognize his/her ethical responsibility in spurring (or slowing) activities in his/her country or region. Whether farmers find out about a new irrigation technique in their local newspaper, or whether information about a new green technology is spread on a science news website at a given time, may have a social and economic impact at many levels. In the case of farmers, a small rural community's livelihood in a dry landscape might depend on knowledge of this specific irrigation method. In the case of a science website, their timeliness may impact investment trends on the market that make or break the viability of a breakthrough energy technology.

"Growth" has a certain meaning in economics. But Growth can also designate the social processes that build our societies: social progress, shaping community values, educational development, peace-building and conflict-solving - e.g. anything that involves having and using ideas to make things better. Journalism contributes to all these kinds of growth, and many more. In other words, journalism helps the process of growing as a Civilization, building a Civilization, becoming civilized. As a journalist, you can think about what this means to you, and make sure your reporting contributes to this process.