The social dynamics of sources and flows of news
Introduction

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In recent decades, research into journalism has moved away from a narrow media-centric approach to include, as Schlesinger (1990) suggested, a greater emphasis on the sources of news. These are to be considered not as static or unique but rather as dynamic and diverse; indeed they often compete with each other for what they offer, and access to, the media. They thus feed the news-flow which, over time, bears the imprint of successive technologies and trends to internationalisation (Mattelart, 2000) – a process that has accelerated in recent years with the development of the Internet (George, 2011). Websites and social network sites have rapidly joined the existing range of print, audiovisual and electronic media that purvey news. In addition, they provide new outlets or spaces for the expression of individuals or organisations (companies, public-sector administrations, associations); these may themselves become sources for the media, and might even enable them to bypass, via the Internet, the usual gatekeepers of the media (Cardon, 2010).

Despite such changes, the basics remain true: sources and flows both contribute to fashion the constituents of news. There is an admixture: sources feed the news-flow[1], while the latter purvey new information which may itself prove sources for future news. Conceptually, therefore, one must not sepa-

rate these constituents; it would be wrong to distinguish between an 'up-stream' and a 'down-stream' in journalism news-flows, as is suggested by the liquid ('sources', 'flow') metaphor (Neveu, 2009).

Social dynamics underpin the issue of news sources and flows. On the one hand, journalists, as they select news, are in fact negotiating between the different protagonists that compete to overcome the barrier of the gatekeepers and thus acceed to the status of a news-item. On the other, a news-item is relayed by the multiple channels within a given society; these are themselves situated socially and historically, and help determine whether or not other media relay a given item.

Thus, the relationship between sources and news-flows is not linear and unidirectional; it is the result of a complex dynamic underpinning journalism as a whole. We shall first define the terms of the debate, so as to highlight their interdependence. We do so by taking into account the contributions of a wide range of researchers. Then, we review the articles of this dossier that exemplify current approaches and findings.

NEWS, SOURCES, FLOWS: DEFINITIONS REVISITED

In a journal aimed at specialists in the field, we need not dwell at length on definitions of news and journalism. We seek merely to clarify what we are about and above all to highlight the interconnections with the other two terms – 'sources' and 'flows'.

The most fundamental definition relates to the link between news, the current and the topical. In the 12th century, 'newes' refers to 'an account of a recent event'; in the 13th century, 'the annoucement of an event'. There is also mention of 'what is learnt by public rumour' (1549) or due to 'newsmongers' (1620); news is also what is relayed by various channels (1659), first and foremost by newspapers (Palmer, Nicey, 2011: 212-214). Therefore, it is this link with what is timely or 'of the moment' – albeit as relayed via a range of channels and forms that themselves evolve over time ('news-flashes' on the radio; weekly, monthly, quarterly publications) – that sets journalists' representations of the world apart from those of, say, artists or scientists.

Nonetheless, a symbolic frontier protecting journalism is still in place. It is one of the reasons why private and public organisations develop communication strategies so as to foster an image of journalism, and thereby of objectivity. In addition, they seek to be invested with the power of the media to attract the attention of readers, listeners, TV viewers and Internet users, in an environment saturated by news.

Plural, active sources

Journalistic discourse contains many different discourses (Mouillaud, Tétu, 1989). The sources of an article or a news-report clearly appear from a host of external and reported discourse (interviews, quotes, document extracts…). Most of the time, news-items emerge as a composite structure (Lewis *et al.*, 2008) that itself is fashioned out of a material which is devised by 'actor-sources' that fall into three categories.

The first category: witnesses of a happenstance (to use the American term) that the media consider to be an event. The 'common Jo' or 'Mr. and Mrs. Everyman' who are on the scene (a crime, an accident, etc.) are interviewed by journalists who then transcibe or otherwise refer to what they say. When the media-story lasts and becomes a long-running story that includes other topics for several days (a *media hype* according to Wien & Elmelund-Praestekaer, 2009), witness and fact-centric accounts are gradually replaced by the expert and his comments or analysis, as relayed by journalists. Witnesses and experts are therefore generally sources which journalists have sought out. However, in tune with the development of the Internet, witnesses and experts may themselves take the initiative and transmit their knowledge (of the event and of the broader context) to the media. This can take various forms: amateur videos of a natural catastrophe; blogs of experts who transmit their reactions to breaking developments via social network sites; it is revealing that in some cases, the latter are called 'personal branding', indicative of the recourse to the professional communications strategies of organisations.

Accordingly, the second category is a source insofar as it aims to promote its ideas, products and services via the media. The aim is not so much commercial promotion via advertising but a more subtle inclusion in the news space of a given media. Since the 1970s organisations have developed ever-more sophisticated means of so doing (Miège, 1996): they devise "events" tailor-made for the media – press and public relations department, press releases press conferences, etc. These organisations may have conflicting interests: for example, nuclear industry companies, ministries of the environment, non-governmental environment associations. They seek to outdo one another as they compete for the attention of the media; as they do so, they show how media-savvy they are (Neveu, 1999).

Professional colleagues form the third, last but not least, category. Other media professionals are often major sources of news. Some of these, news-agency journalists, fully accept this; indeed, it is central to what they do. For others, including journalists of on-going broadcast news-channels, the all-importance of other media as news-sources was not initially fully taken into account but it has developed apace. Websites with limited resources but which are required to provide 'hard news' (Boczowski, 2010) reinforce this emphasis on news monitoring or news tuning (Quandt, 2008). This has long existed; consider, for instance, how the in-house editorial conference looks at what the competition is doing. Doubtless this trend increases with the development of integrated or 'bi-media' (press and Web) news-rooms; more and more, big screens displaying the ouput of transnational news channels loom large.

How more and more news-flows are organized

This point illustrates how the multiplication of news-flows is a feature of contemporary society. But it would be wrong to consider this as a radically new phenomenon – in 1888, Zola wrote of 'the unbridled flow of streams of news' (Palmer, Nicey, 2011: 24); others signalled its existence in 17th century England. Nor that it is unorganized.

The flow of news, envisaged as the circuits via which fresh topical news circulates, depends both on a range of physical resources (the distribution of newspapers, the transmission of bits by digital neworks, …) just as much as on informal means (verbal communications between sources and journalists, discussion of topical news when at work or at play, etc.). Digital developments accentuate the appearance in a material form – or rather the 'textualisation' (Després-Lonnet, Cotte, 2005) – of part of what, previously, were informal exchanges. This has doubtless fostered an increase in the flow of news in a material form, but one cannot tell whether the entirety of the flows (both of a material and informal nature) has indeed increased.

This said, one point is not in doubt and must be underlined: the flows of news, whatever their form, never occur in isolation. The channels via which news circulates always depend on the historical and social environment. This is true of informal exchanges about news: ever since the pioneering empirical studies of the middle of the 20th century, we know that news circulates in society neither staightforwardly nor in full; it depends on pre-established social relationships (Lazarsfeld, Katz, 1955). Similarly, the transmission of news, whether via the telegraph, broadcast media or the Internet, depends on the political, economic and social context in which they emerge (Flichy, 1995).

Thus, we may conclude that news-flows are organised historically, geographically and socially each time the various 'actor-sources' come into play. In an on-going process, how a news-item or 'piece of news' evolves depends on the nature of the sources involved; the media that transmitted the news itself becomes a source. There is rarely – if ever? – only one, original source, but rather a range of incremental sources. How they interplay depends on the organisation of each news-flow: there are certain recurrent features (news-agencies as recognised media who give a news-item legitimacy, prescribing media…).

THE SOURCE-FLOW RELATIONSHIP

The dynamics of the interdependence between the sources and the flows of news can be studied from various angles. We pinpoint three of these, without pretending to exhaustivity, but because they lend themselves to a joint-consideration of the interplay between sources and flows.

The first approach is international in nature and predominantly geopolitical. Based on a critical political economy vision of communications, international news-flows, which are still concentrated on the geographic zones of dominant states, are seen as a transposition of the inequality of exchanges between different countries and continents. The world 'order' of information is superposed on the economic and geopolitical 'order'. The analysis of the output of news-transnationals – news-agencies and, subsequently, ongoing continuous news media – highlights their key role as a source – both in real terms and figuratively – of this imbalance. This raises the question: should one say 'source' or 'purveyor', in line with the ever-growing complexity of output and interplay, a continuous intermingling?

The second approach is sociological. It calls on different theories. Beginning with the very first ethnographic studies of newsrooms, several empirical studies described the material elements used by journalists in their work and the constraints under which they operated which often rendered their relations with their sources asymetric. From a pragmatic viewpoint, recent research has often identified more subtly the great diversity of these relationships and the "grammars" by which they are conducted (Lemieux, 2000). But it is above all holist sociology that has lent itself to a comprehensive analysis of the source-flow relationship. The concept of 'the journalistic field' made it possible to highlight

Eric Lagneau, Jérémie Nicey, Michael Palmer, Franck Rebillard - *The social dynamics of sources and flows of news*

how the competition between media stimulated indeed by the dominant media (whether 'mass' or whose limited audience has an important symbolic legitimacy) favoured a 'follow-my-leader' approach, and the 'circular circulation of news' (Bourdieu, 1996).

A third approach in fact led back to the initial models of how news circulates. The difference is above all one of method. The development of the Internet not only produced new areas for research but also made empirical data available for digital analysis. It therefore becomes possible to monitor the circulation process on an ever-wider scale and to assess, for example, whether Internet users are taking the place of media professionals as sources or to identify which sites become prescribers on the Web.

The new world information order: the geopolitics of news – a political economy approach

Grounded in the geopolitical context from which it emerged, the debate on a New world order of information and communication (NWICO) in the 1970s-80s at least resulted in the production of a seminal work, the MacBride report, *Many voices, one world*. More recently, the debate surrounding the World summit on the information society (WSIS) conducted at the turn of the new millenium, was marked, likewise, by the geopolitics of the time – and, it may be added, the geotechnical and geoeconomic context – but did not result in a similar seminal text.

In the 1970s-80s, the decolonisation of many countries world-wide was largely complete and the division of the world, between the East and the West since the end of the second world war, was gradually coming to an end; at the same time, demands of the North voiced by countries of the Southern hemisphere intensified. News was of vital geostrategic importance: the result was a cacophony of interpretations of the terms 'information/news'. The many connotations of these terms only added to the existing senses of the term 'communication'. But two factors were crystal-clear: the perception that news was as vital to human existence as, say, water (which incidentally only strengthened the liquid metaphor mentioned above) and the feeling that one international actor – news or press agencies – seemed to symbolise the issues at stake. As most leading international news-agencies were based in the West, these agencies were held to be responsible for the imbalance in the flow of international news: it was claimed that they inundated the South with news of little or no interest and that they deformed and blackened news of the South that they relayed to the North.

The above-mentioned document, known as the 'MacBride report' (to give it its full name: the report of the international commission studying communication problems), and the accompanying preparatory documents and recommendations became the artefacts of a confrontation between different worldviews. The word 'order' in the acronym NWICO (in French: NOMIC) was as ill-received as the connotations of the terms 'information' and 'communication' were varied.

At the time, the word 'propaganda' was anathema to nearly everyone but the terms 'information' and 'news' could be synonymous, for some, with the notion of 'self-interested promotion' or 'publicity'. Many argued that news was fact-centric, grounded in positivism and in a vision of pluralist media. There were references to a knowledge society and, in a very different context, to an information economy in which, to quote from the Porat report (1977), it was argued that over half of the US labour-force was involved in 'information work'. In any event, the aforementioned news-agencies were held by some of those who spoke in the worldwide debate sometimes held under the aegis of UNESCO, to operate as transnationals relaying some 80% of the world-wide news-flow. They were critiqued as an oligopoly, with little or no mention of the competition between them and the cost-factor; news-gathering and transmission costs were high at the time. During the same period, the number of national news agencies and television channels was on the rise, but many of these relayed primarily 'official' news. It is worth recalling that the NWICO debate occurred shortly prior to the increase in the number of satellite TV channels and the advent of other telecommunications technologies which were to radically alter news and information flows. To put it in a nutshell: the content of news was centre-stage at a time when technologies and economics were to prove more decisive than ever.

It is worth noting, however, that at least the debate drew attention to the role of a very small number of international actors – radio stations, TV channels, news-agencies – which acted as lynchpins in the distribution of news worldwide (Boyd-Barrett, Palmer, 1981).

Content, media, networks, equipment, production, editing, transmission, and interactions with different publics… had to be considered as whole, world-wide. There was already an information overload – even if, in vast areas of the world, news was controlled, biased and censored; subsequently, there would be a multiplication in the number of those who produce news, as indeed in the number of networks and technologies that facilitate multi-directional exchanges, some – but not all – of which

procede via so-called traditional media (Paterson, Sreberny, 2004; Frau-Meigs *et al.,* 2012).

From the source-journalist asymetry to the circular circulation of news: the sociological approach to journalism

We cannot summarise in a few lines the contibutions of several decades of the sociology of journalism to the analysis of how news is manufactured and communicated. Here we shall merely point to certain relevant results. From the outset, journalism sociology did not confine itself to the sociology of the profession; it explored in depth how journalists worked, the circuits of news and how professionals made news choices, highlighting their role as gatekeepers. In a pioneering study, David Manning White (1950) analysed how a telegraph editor on a daily serving a town of 100 000 people in the Midwest, in charge of the national and international pages of the paper, chose a tenth from the output of the three leading US agencies of the time. One then had to wait until the 1970s and the development, in the US first, of a sociology of news-making; this approach was socio-constructivist and often critical. Many ethnomethodological studies of news-rooms were conducted. These enriched an understanding of the social dynamics of the production of news and of the complexity of how journalists chose from what was on offer. For instance, Herbert Gans (1980) studied in depth the issue of news-worthiness (how journalists perceived what was truly 'newsy'); this recalled the notion of 'the sensation of what was topical' proposed by Gabriel Tarde in 1898. Gans studied the news-rooms of four media (CBS, NBC, *Time, Newsweek*). The following is one of the strengths of his study: he showed how the likelihood of an event becoming a news-item chosen by journalists depended not only on its suitability, in terms of their own expectations and those of the(ir) public(s) but also on the economy of its processing by journalists; the cost of the availability of the means of access could be a decisive factor. Furthermore, Gaye Tuchman (1978) insisted that the analyst of news-making should take into account the stucture of the media and how they organise their coverage of news, which is often determined by what established institutions do or say (Newsnet) as is evidenced by the make-up of the news pages. The notion of news-value was used by the journalist Julian Ralph in an address he gave in New York in 1892.

A major paradox underlying these sociological observations of news-rooms was the identification of the importance of the role played by outside factors, i.e, the sources of news, especially established institutions; this proved true both of the news that was selected and of how it was checked and contextualised. Journalism sociology has established without doubt how journalists are dependent on institutional sources; one might thus escape fom the trap of mediacentrism to better understand how news is produced or manufactured (Schlesinger, 1990). Controversies – such as that between Stuart Hall (Hall, 1978) and Philip Schlesinger (Schlesinger and Tumber, 1995) on the notion of 'primary definers' – led researchers to adopt a dynamic approach to such issues. Even long-established institutions have to deploy pro-active strategies to engage the attention of journalists for these sources often come across the resistance of journalists who are sollicited by other, competing, sources (Derville, 1997). An abundant and rich research literature surveys the complex relations between journalists and their sources, and the subtle grammars of this relationship (Lemieux, 2000), centering in particular on the relations between journalists and communication operatives, 'rival associates' (Legavre, 2007).

These ethnographic observations also highlighted how news moves from one news-room to another. Pierre Bourdieu (1996) produced the most striking formula to describe the phenomenon: 'the circular circulation of news'. He began by noting that journalists, who share many common traits – social origins, education and training – read one another's output, meet each other a lot. This means that the first people to read, hear or see a journalist's output are other journalists; often they all share the same sophisticated way of monitoring output (press reviews, alert systems…). Thus, paradoxically, the pressures of competition result in the homogeneisation of what journalists produce, the 'small differences' that seem so all-important to the professionals are in effect nullified by the 'enormous similarities'. For Bourdieu, the final result is 'an enormous homogenous amalgam imposed by the (vicious) circle of circular circulating news between people who – it mustn't be forgotten – are all subservient to the dictates of audience measurement'.

This metaphor calls attention to the need to scrutinise the details of how this circulation operates, to seek out the dominant circuits and to identify which are the most prescribing media. Bourdieu states that such a study should focus on the entirety of the journalistic field and on the power of the dominant commercial media (especially the leading TV channel TF1 in France) which are motivated by audience ratings. Different approaches lead to similar results: the homogeneisation of content is also noted in the study conducted a decade later by Bockowski (2010) in a different geographic context and at a different period, a period marked by the rise of the Internet. A slightly different perspective on the phenomenon of follow-my-leader and of media imitation frenzy is

Eric Lagneau, Jérémie Nicey, Michael Palmer, Franck Rebillard - *The social dynamics of sources and flows of news*

suggested by a sociology of media visibility; pragmatist in inspiration, it analyses the 'channels of translation' that progress from the event proper to the public, highlighting the continuing dominant role of news-agencies (Lagneau, 2010). Without necessarily adopting a system-centric view (held also by Mathien, 1992), many studies seek to conduct empirical research into how news circulates to highlight typical media processes.

News networks: how digital methods renew the analysis of how news spreads

Analysis of how news spreads or is disseminated was central to some of the first major empirical studies into mass media. Successive research projects conducted by the team led by Paul Lazarsfeld at Columbia highlighted the gradual movement of the dissemination of news throughout society. By contrast with the initial supposition that news relayed by the media had a uniform impact on the population, it was established that the dissemination of news proceeded by two stages ('the two-step flow of communication'); it first impacted on those who were fully exposed to the media, opinion leaders, who then relayed, vulgarised the news to those around them.

Several studies in the 1960s and, to a lesser extent, in the 1970s (DeFleur, 1987) explored this notion of news networks, and of how news was appropriated via informal exchanges in various social circles (family, friends, work-place); this complemented the transmission of news by the media. These studies were often focused on major news-events or on breaking news; while noting certain common traits in how news percolated through society, they sometimes minimised the role of opinion leaders. One of the first such studies (Deutschmann, Danielson, 1960) show how in Lansing (Michigan), 82% the population learnt of the heart attack of President Eisenhower in 1955 via the media and 18% via word-of-mouth; the respective figures for the annoucement of the launch of the Exporer I satellite in 1958 were 77% and 23%. Everett Rogers quotes these figures in his book on the diffusion of innovations (2003: 75-77). More broadly, he stresses the congruence between these approaches and his own conceptual models in the sociology of innovation: the key role of early adopters, who closely resemble opinion leaders, and the 'S' curves that represent how innovation proceeds step by step throughout society.

This transdisciplinary cross-fertilisation has long characterised the network approach to the social dissemination of news. This does not mean that there were no longer studies in the 1980s and 1990s focusing solely on how news spread; one might cite the major comparative study on how the news of the murder of the Swedish prime minister, Olof Palme, circulated in some 12 countries; the study proved particularly sophisticated in how it took into account the nature of the event, social structures and national media systems (Rosengren, 1987). Meanwhile, advances in research into the dissemination of news, stemming from the sociology of interpersonal relations were recycled especially in marketing and the word-of-mouth school. They were further renewed with the development of the Internet and the self-proclaimed 'new science of networks' (Mellet, 2009).

This patchwork mixture of the sociology of social networks and of computer science, but also of fractal physics and of the mathematical theory of graphs, was developed during the 2000s. The pan-disciplinary ambitions of the new science of networks, that some proclaim with a quasi-revolutionary fervour (see Newman *et al.*, 2006), seem to have quietened down a little. Rather than pressing for a change in the scientific paradigm, it has led more modestly to methodological innovation, sometimes subsumed under the heading 'digital methods' (Rogers, 2010). These seek to build on digital data peculiar to the Internet so as to analyse the latter. It is true that digital artefacts of usage and content archived on the Internet present researchers, especially those studying the media, with incomparable *corpora* on a hitherto unheard of scale. And in addition to this methodological prospect, the Internet is the venue where a series of new communication vectors emerge that differ radically from the mass media: blogs, wikis and other so-called participatory sites, social network sites. Thus, on a theoretical level, with Internet users able to use new tools to publish and relay information, the hypothesis has been put forward of 'the re-inclusion of social networks in public communication' (Domingo *et al.*, 2008).

This is the context in which much recent research has been conducted. It is impossible to summarise the findings of this research. Or indeed to summarise the methodological approximations that weaken some of them (see Rebillard, 2011, for further details). Here, given the range of the studies of this emerging research sector, it is best perhaps to point out potential implications for research into sources and the flow of news.

To take news on-line first: research has been conducted to examine whether the new ways of disseminating news result from the possibilities available to Internet users to intervene in the news-flow more than was previously the case. The role of bloggers as sources and relays of news was examined first. A study conducted in South Korea (Im *et al.*, 2011) was explicitly grounded in the tradition of work on news diffusion; it advanced the concept of the 'news seed'

so as to better highlight how bloggers may publish news or build on news published by professional media so as to relay them anew, once they had been modified. This study, like many others, refers to the post-modern theories of 'participatory culture' or the 'spreadability' of 'media viruses' (Jenkins, 2009). They draw different conclusions. News on the Internet seems to experience many transformations; but, given the lack of similar data culled from previous studies, it is impossible to tell what is truly novel[2]. Above all, the diffusion curbs noted on the Internet seem to closely resemble those when only mass media were studied ('S' curves). Subsequent research focussed on social network networks. These are often characterised by a gigantic mass of empirical data: hundreds of thousands, if not millions of digital data (messages, profiles of user accounts, links between accounts or to websites, etc) are analysed so as to retrace the social circuits of the dissemination of news in a far more exhaustive manner than was possible with the methods used previously (surveys, interviews). Studies of Facebook, by far the most widely used social network site, try to ascertain social practices linked to on-line news, the most influential members and the relevant models of dissemination. Twitter is more geared to news, and lends itself to closer analysis of the source-flow relationship. In this regard, some researchers (Asur *et al.*, 2011) suggest that the accounts relating to the 'trending topics' on Twitter are those where leading brand-names (including CNN, *New York Times*, Reuters, BBC) were the most quoted. Caution however is needed when making such a claim; it depends solely on a quantitative method based on the names of Twitter accounts and not on a sociological investigation that makes it possible to cross-check the identity of the account-holders. Nonetheless these findings corroborate others that stress the prominent role of professional media in the flow of news on the Internet. Some of the best known of these brand-names do not hesitate to trumpet aloud their dominant role on the Internet; in 2002, CNN boasted: 'Today, you don't have to follow the news, it's the news that follows you' (Palmer, Nicey, 2011: 120).

In addition to the study of the role of Internet users in the dissemination of news, digital methods are used to analyse the flow of news between professional sites. The 'Hubs and authorities' model, one of the major models of the new network science, used to distinguish, on the Web, between the major referrer sites and linked sites, has been adapted to make it possible to examine on-line news flows (Weber, Monge, 2012). The result was more or less expected: the major agencies (Reuters , Associated Press) as *sources*, the sites of major daily newspapers (*New York Times, Los Angeles Times*) as *authorities,* and portals as search engines as *hubs* (Google News, Yahoo News).

Thus digital methods are used to analyse what in the past were the formal news-flows, and not only informal flows in so far as the latter are surimposed on the former. It should also be noted that digital methods used to analyse news-flows can be applied over and beyond on-line news; this is because news originally relayed on other media (paper and broadcast) are gradually being digitized. For example, the Factiva data base of newspaper archives, for the period 2005-11, enabled the Pulse-Web project to retrace international press coverage of the issue of food security on three major 'streams' (Cointet *et al.*, 2011). Similarly, the Geomedia project analysing the mediatisation of the different regions of the world is based on Factiva data and also on RSS feeds of leading national dailies websites; this project is reminiscent of the issues raised in the world information debate. Finally, the OT-Media project[3] aims to form a transmedia data base: this is composed of digitized data from the press, radio, television and digital data from the Web. It should thus be possible to study news-flows throughout the whole French media landscape and to identify the major media prescribers of the gatekeeping process and how news is recycled or duplicated. Its approach is geared to the traditional preoccupations of the sociology of journalism. Thus, overall, it can be seen that digital methods help reinforce study of recurrent issues posed by the question of sources and the news-flow. In addition to the dissemination of news, they can provide empirical data that nurture the two other approaches – the geopolitics of news and the sociology of journalism.

SOME CONTEMPORARY ILLUSTRATIONS

The three aforementioned approaches have existed for several decades. They are still very present in current research, as exemplified by the articles in this dossier. The contributing authors are based in different countries (France, Portugal, the UK, the USA), in line with this journal's aim to cover journalism research in three major world languages. A wide range of media are examined: the daily newspaper press, Web news sites, news-agencies including video agencies.

John Jirik's study specifically refers to issues in the New world information debate. He provides detailed references to the literature of the geopolitics of news which could only be mentioned cursorily in this introduction. His study of Reuters TV argues for the persistence of the domination of the newsflow by news from and about the West, even if there

　Eric Lagneau, Jérémie Nicey, Michael Palmer, Franck Rebillard - *The social dynamics of sources and flows of news*

are signs of a greater presence of emerging world countries.

Sonia Lamy's article is likewise relatively mainstream; she however studies the relationship between journalists and their sources. She examines the communication strategies of non-governmental organisations via the place they are allocated in the columns of a major Portugese daily. She shows how the negotiation of gatekeeping between journalists and their sources depends largely on what are major news-topics (the humanitarian crisis, environmental concerns)

Sylvain Parasie and Éric Dagiral are likewise concerned with the asymetry in the journalist-source relationship. They raise the question of how the Internet, that makes available public data, mostly provided by government administrations, can change the ball-game. Digital treatment of these data can provide an additional tool to journalists and indeed enable them to circumvent their usual interlocutors – the police, health authorities.

Emmanuel Marty and Annelise Touboul also look at online journalism. However, they are concerned less with how journalists work than with their output. The two colleagues use digital methods to analyse the chronological succession of a vast corpus of articles. They identify how the Web demonstrates the circular circulation of news; and, indeed, the actors are involved.

The final article is by Chris Paterson, a specialist in international news (news-agencies, ongoing continuous news channels). His many empirical studies help document developments in the world information order. He considers his contribution more in the nature of an essay than a piece of original research. The novel aspect of his article in this dossier is two-fold; the region of his field work here, sub-Saharan Africa is rarely studied; and his findings show that digital communication networks, the Internet and mobile telephones, may well favour the dissemination of news of a truly alternative nature to the flow and sources of news that generally characterise this area of the world.

NOTES

[1] 'Flows' and 'feeds': in French and English, metaphors themselves fashion how the public – both generalist and specialist – describe the totality of news 'in circulation'. Here, we use 'flow', a long-established term for 'a host of news-items' and occasionally 'feed' for a specific situation – e.g. RSS feed and Twitter feed. A 'wire' service exemplifies another, more dated, metaphor. Here, we are primarily concerned with 'news' and less with 'information'; 'data', however, are ever more present as the article progresses.
Another point that complicates translation: if 'news'/*nouvelles* pose few problems, '*l'information*'/'*les informations*' have in the past, sometimes meant 'news', sometimes 'information'; '*les infos*' is still used as a colloquial term for '*les nouvelles*'. Here again, we are primarily concerned with 'news'.

[2] People were questioned as to how they came to learn of a piece of news and whether they transmitted it to others. But it was not possible to measure how they had altered the news.

[3] OT-Media, the Transmedia Observatory to which two of the coordinators of this dossier belong, is supported by a grant from the French Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR 2010 CORD 0I506).

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