

## Call for papers

# *Sources and flows of news*

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‘Radio announces the event, television shows it, the press explains it’: the adage of Hubert Beuve-Méry, who founded the French daily newspaper *Le Monde* in 1944 and directed it until 1969, has long been used to depict processes of news circulations. Such a view is largely incomplete, though — it is outdated. On the one hand, it only takes into account the visible part of the media system, and it ignores the role of news agencies for example. For obvious reasons, novel developments are not mentioned: the development of business and organisational communications; the creation and proliferation of 24/7 broadcasting and online news sites, and related Internet news and data offers. In an age of Web 2.0, of social networks, international news content is itself undergoing radical change: ‘traditional’ transnational media companies consider themselves ‘threatened’ and reinvent themselves; 24/7 TV news channels diversify their programmes time and again. The coverage of international conflicts changes accordingly. The circulation of news, the identification of sources and the change in the very nature of news conduits and actors require re-assessment both in theory and practice.

Research hitherto has not always addressed these issues in depth. In the 1980s, in relation with the UNESCO-led debate on the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), researchers considered the influence of transnational news agencies regarding the definition of the international media agenda, in favour of Western countries (Boyd-Barrett, Palmer, 1981). Approaches highlighted the perspectives of and/or media imperialism; they reappeared in research on actors such as 24/7 TV news channels (CNN, Al-Jazeera, etc.) (Paterson, Sreberny, 2004). Similarly, criticism about repetitive and the recycling of news television, with respect to the selection of both news-stories and commentators on different outlets, was popularized by the expression ‘the circular circulation of news’ (Bourdieu, 1996) and revamped ‘gatekeeping theory’ (White, 1950); in the context of Internet, such criticism merits re-examination.

While blogs and webzines appear to present ‘alternative news offerings’, news circuits tend to be duplicated on the web (Palmer, 2011) and information reprocessed (Rebillard, 2006) via search engines and aggregators. The Internet may be considered as a place where ‘ordinary’ individuals themselves contribute to the flow of information: they either exchange content with one another (via e-mails and digital social networks) or they produce and directly broadcast their own news content (via blogs and via contributions on collaborative journalism websites). This ambivalent position between news producer and news user is sometimes called ‘produser’ (Bruns, 2005); we need to review the distinction between what were previously different sets of practices (news production by professional journalists *vs.* news consumption by the audience) and the

respective approaches of sociology of journalism, of media discourse analysis and of the sociology of media reception and interpersonal relationships. In this context, as recent research on news-basics shows (Im *et al.*, 2011), the analysis of sources and flows of information might well bring together previous research on the interpersonal circulation of news (Rogers, 2000), media practices and novel online information flows.

### Issues and themes of this dossier:

'Sources and flows of news' call for papers reflects this broad perspective. Submissions will focus on the following themes and/or their inter-relationships:

- Analysis of the present 'media-scape'.

The US-based Pew Foundation conducted one of the first real trans-media studies; it centered on news published in the press, broadcast on radio and television, and transmitted via Internet (PEJ, 2010). This content analysis-study focusing on Baltimore county highlighted the salience of local daily newspapers in defining the local media agenda, and the low degree of originality of news on websites or Twitter. Is such a model relevant beyond a given county or region and indeed the US? Few major studies of this phenomenon have been conducted: so it is difficult to reply. This special dossier of *About Journalism* aims to bring together comparative studies addressing 'news-media spaces' at a range of levels (regional, or national, or even international and global) and focuses on the circulation of news within different media and outlets (agencies and/or print media and/or radio and/or television and/or the Internet). So as to measure the production, recycling and distribution of news, we would contributions that monitor the circuit of news and its transformation over both the long and the short term.

- The material used by news actors.

Journalists' practice is a much-explored field by sociologists and media scholars. Here, we would like to collect case studies specifically focused on the material used by journalists in the news-editorial production process. Press kits and press releases may be further analyzed. The British study thereupon (Lewis *et al.*, 2008), showing the high proportion of public relations content in newspapers, in TV news bulletins and in agency news-flashes, might serve as a model for studies that aim to break with 'media centrism'. The observation of news-producers might be broadened. It could address news agency journalists, specialised in providing and recycling in line with recent studies in France (Lagneau, 2010; Laville, 2011; Palmer and Nicey, 2011). Analysis of actors who are not classified as professional journalists (online bloggers, 'citizen' journalists) would help assessment of novel practices of news collection and selection — *newsworthiness*.

- The news circulation theory.

An international research group lead by Domingo (2008) recently suggested that thanks to digital technologies, social relationships and networks were re-included in the production of news — the latter had long been the domain of mass media. Is such a theoretical model relevant? Are ordinary 'exchanges' about the news — even via digital texts (e-mails, tweets, online comments) — to be considered alongside professional journalistic news-products? How and should distinctions be drawn?

More broadly, the very vocabulary of 'news-flows' should be re-assessed. What do we mean by 'news'? 'information'? 'data'? 'flow'? 'sources'? Does the term 'sources' refer more to 'the human element' or to a given 'news medium'? Do 'flows' and 'conduits' serve as metaphors that may

lead to a functionalist vision of the media? The study of the ‘circulation of news’ requires re-assessment — both in theory and practice. This dossier seeks to stimulate this.

**Submission of articles (30.000 to 50.000 signs, including References and footnotes) before 15<sup>th</sup> May 2012. Contributors should express an interest before 15<sup>th</sup> January 2012 to :**

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The articles will be subject to ‘double-blind’ assessments; they should include theoretical references, research methods and a corpus reference.

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