

Call for papers

*“Governing” journalists*

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Taking such a notion as the “government” of journalists as a postulate, this issue aims at examining the effects of public structures, actions, and incentives on journalism. Its objective is also to question the various modes of State action as far as journalism is concerned, with a focus on journalists, their practices, and the information they release in the light of the relationship between those governing and those governed. The notion of “government” is here used as Michel Foucault did, i.e. “a set of techniques and procedures meant to rule men’s actions”, while also taking strategies to resist or circumvent such techniques and procedures into account. The “government” of journalists, as it now stands, results from the succession and superimposition of regulations and institutions which lie at the confluence of diverse visions of the relationships between the freedom to inform, entrepreneurial freedom, people’s right to obtain information, and the “protection” of journalists. While such guidelines primarily rest upon French cases, this issue shall welcome contributions which examine foreign contexts.

Since the press became industrialized in the late nineteenth century, French State action has mainly focused on journalistic contents, first by controlling the freedom to inform (the 1881 Act), then by establishing the legal status of journalists with an act passed in 1935 to compensate for the failure of negotiations between trade-unions and public authorities. From then on, an *ad hoc* committee called “la Commission de la Carte”, mostly composed of journalists and employers and acting on behalf of the State, is in charge of journalistic affairs. Two other committees, respectively known as “la Commission arbitrale” (an arbitration committee) and “la Commission paritaire de l’emploi” (an equal-representation committee set up in 1976) then completed such an apparatus. State action also means public funding, provided to the media as determined by “the general interest” via a ministerial department called “la Direction générale des médias et industries culturelles” and a committee involving the Communication, the Economy, the Budget, the Justice and the Culture ministries.

Furthermore, recent measures stand in line with some sort of “government” and “administration” of journalists. The judiciary dimension seems to be the most tangible one, especially when it comes to sources, as they directly affect the journalists’ work in connection with his/her access to information and the protection of his/her informants. While the bill on the secret of sources was being introduced, debated upon, and ultimately passed, the Bettencourt case along with the indictment of several journalists involved in other cases stressed the problem raised by the vagueness of “the national interest” mentioned in the law. The *Hadopi* law, which does not specifically target journalists, nonetheless concerns them, especially in terms of

copyrights. In a different field, one may also think of the reform of trade-union representation within media companies, which trade-unions eventually bypassed by invoking exception clauses.

However, apart from laws whose efficiency may be questioned, other powerful factors such as fiscal policies, economics, the general interest and democracy, suggest that journalism ought also to be analysed in view of “a multiple-government regime”, to quote Foucault. For instance, the round table talks of the press, which were summoned by the president of the Republic in 2008 and generated both support and hostility from journalists, provided food for thought concerning political action targeting journalism. The work of the 2010 national conference on journalistic professions, which was held under the aegis of the Employment, the Culture and the Higher education ministries in 2010 and whose inaugural theme was journalism training, may also be discussed within the notion of the “government” of journalists. The growing role played by the aforesaid equal-representation committee in defining the contents of professional training, and in delineating this sector partly partly is in line with the strategy consisting in organizing this “market” in the light of the recent reform of higher education in France.

The issue aims at assessing the more or less frontal power exerted by public authorities on journalistic information, professional identity and companies, by exploring the historical as well as the contemporary junctions between state interventionism and *laissez-faire*. Apart from those diverse modes, one may also wonder about the regional and supranational levels, and focus on how the exercise of journalism, the definition of it along with its operating modes, as well as the emergence, development or disappearance of such or such media types and contents, which may depend on public policies. On the contrary, it may be relevant to reflect upon the reasons why governments will not intervene in media affairs, or why professional organizations will anticipate, generate, influence or circumvent public action.

*Propositions may be determined along four main guidelines:*

#### **The structure of the media field :**

The idea is to analyse the impact of past and present schemes which, both in France and abroad, have tended to turn state intervention into a process of official recognition bestowed upon media companies : for instance, one may think of the criteria making newspapers eligible for direct and indirect support, one may indeed think of the requirements imposed upon newspapers for them to be sold in newsstands (the *Bichet* Act), and, more recently, of the help provided in France to the development of e-media. This includes the attribution of wave-lengths and advertising regulations, especially on state-owned television channels.

#### **The orientation of journalistic treatment**

Such a guideline focuses on the discourse interactions between the selection and treatment of information in connection with the publicity or visibility on which public policies rest. The renewed modes of public action have generated the release of data, caused societal issues such as immigration or the environment to be discussed, and engendered new processes to designate and categorize social actions and actors. What is the influence of such elements on news treatment? Conversely, what is the part played by journalistic productions in the way public issues are formulated? Do such issues result in the emergence of new newspapers and magazines, new ad hoc sections within them, or alternative information treatment?

#### **The Public service management**

The emphasis here lies upon the long-term effects of reforms in the audio-visual field on public-service journalists and information, i.e. the modes of appointment of senior managers, the evolution of staff statuses, the outsourcing of productions, and cost-reducing inducements. Such phenomena do have an impact on the private sector too, which might be analyzed as well.

Moreover, although there is no public written press, one could well inquire into the existence of media which may have played such a part, such as *Le Moniteur universel* or *Le Journal officiel*, or into that of hybrid companies which are partly owned by the State, such as the *Agence France Presse*.

### **The legitimising process of journalists**

The professional identity of a journalist evolves according to the modes of “government” imposed upon him by the authorities. The consequences may be both global (new regulations regarding copyrights, questions about a journalist’s professional status, training regulations), or involve more specific aspects of journalistic practices (legal regulations regarding the protection of sources). Moreover, the modes of public representation of journalists shall be analyzed here, by examining the evolution of trade-unionism, both in France and abroad, or the way equal representation committees operate. Eventually, analyses of the strategies devised by journalists to circumvent public control such as those resorted to by “unchartered” journalists or the recourse to dissimulation or disguise in face of censorship also fall within the scope of this symposium.

**Submission of articles** (30.000 to 50.000 signs, including references and footnotes) **before 15<sup>th</sup> January 2013** : <http://surlejournalisme.com/rev/index.php/slj/author/submit/1>

Articles may be offered in English, Portuguese, French or Spanish

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

## **The Journal** *About Journalism – Sur le journalisme – Sobre jornalismo...*

... is a **meeting point** of historically shaped intellectual traditions and centers of interests in journalism studies. The field of journalism studies has developed with different epistemologies, approaches and methodologies that inform national intellectual formations and linguistic territories. The journal provokes the encounter of these approaches and research results, by its clearly international positioning. In the context of globalization and relative homogenization of the mediatic systems and journalistic practices, the review also looks at the convergences and resistances of journalistic and scientific cultures.

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The journal is a **launching pad** for the publication of innovative works in transdisciplinary perspectives and publishes researches of both established scholars and students. Published on line and on paper, thematic issues are organized around precise problematizations of original theoretical and methodological findings. Thesis results, scientific reports and accounts, field and research notes, may also be included in any given issue.

The review is a **rendezvous** between diverse research curiosities and ways of looking at journalism in an arena of high scientific vitality.

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