

About Journalism – Sur le journalisme – Sobre jornalismo

International scientific journal

<http://surlejournalisme.com/rev>

Call for Papers

The Social Worlds of Journalism

Call for papers published: 15 October 2017

Deadline for submitting full manuscripts: 15 March 2018

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The goal of this issue of *Sur le Journalism - About Journalism - Sobre jornalismo* is to generate a discussion about the concept of the “social world” as formalized by symbolic interactionism (Cefaï, 2015), and what it can bring to the study of journalism.

According to the social world perspective, actors engage in collective activities based on collaborative networks organized around “conventions” (Becker, 1982). “Routine collective activity creates relatively stable patterns of interaction that act as social referents guiding future collective activity” (Gilmore, 1990, p.151). In this case, “membership within all these social worlds involves various generalized commitments, beyond the more specific and easily discernible commitments, to agencies, institutions, organizations, cliques, and specialities associated with the social world” (Strauss, 1997, pp. 165-166).

In his article “A Social World Perspective,” Anselm Strauss states that “social worlds are characteristic of any substantive area” (Strauss, 1978, p. 122). The social world perspective can thus be adopted to study theater, photography, music (see Gilmore, 1990) ... and journalism. Thus, like Becker’s “Art worlds” (1982), there are “journalism worlds” organized around journalistic activity—what Strauss calls “primary activity” (p. 122) and Becker “core activity” (1982, p. 16)—that would include “all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world, and perhaps others as well, define as [journalism]” (p. 34). This perspective is an open invitation to analyze the totality of actors who participate in the processes of production, circulation and consumption of news—however large or

small their participation may be—by shining a light on how things are done, the identities of those participating, the interchange between worlds, the cooperative relationships that develop, as well as the negotiations taking place (Lewis & Zamith, 2017; see also Lewis & Westlund, 2015).

When applied to journalism research, the concept of social worlds has been compared to, and adapted and enriched by, other sociological approaches, depending on the subject, the interest of the researcher, and his or her taste for other theoretical approaches — Hennion's sociology of attachments, for example, or Latourian sociology, cultural studies, pragmatism, and others.

This call for papers revolves around three axes, gravitating in complementary ways around the notion of social worlds. The first axis poses the very Beckerian question, “Who does what?” (Becker, Pessin, 2006, p.178) in the worlds of journalism, or more precisely: **“Who does what, according to what conventions?” (AXIS 1)**. For if we follow Beckerian hypotheses, all actors in the worlds of journalism are integrated into a network in which everyone cooperates according to “conventions” that “*make collective activity simpler and less costly in time, energy, and other resources*” (Becker, 1982, p. 35). These conventions informally structure cooperation between participants and form a kind of “*catalog of social techniques*” (Hennion, 2004, p. 14) that individuals and collectives implement to function optimally at any given moment. It may be a question here of describing what can be called the normal “*presence to the world*” (Hennion, 2004, p. 14) deployed by the “*integrated professionals*” (Becker, 1983) in a given world of journalism. Some literature offers other possible approaches: Becker's work on art worlds, for instance, when applied to journalism, could allow the focus to be redirected from a mythical professional ideology centered on the individual role of journalists (Ruellan, 2007), to “the interactional situations responsible for produced works” (Bastin, 2003, p. 13)—from the calling to the profession. Determining “who does what” is an attempt to describe precisely the worlds of journalism (past or present)—always dynamic, procedural, and collective.

According to Becker (1982), conventions may be standardized, but they are neither rigid nor immutable. Things change. The social world perspective emphasizes, in fact, the dynamics of segmentation and the interlacing of different worlds. Anselm Strauss states that “*within each social world, various issues are debated, negotiated, fought out, forced and manipulated by representatives of implicated subworlds*” (Strauss, 1978, p. 124). Actors, groups, and organizations make “*differential claims, seek differential ends, engage in contests, and make or break alliances in order to do the things they wish to do*” (p. 125). In the worlds of journalism, as in many fields, “*no definition is definitive, [...] no border is a stable front, [...] no principle resists an activity where everything ‘depends’ and everything gets worked out*” (Hennion, 2004, pp. 169-170). You make deals with amateurs (Féron, Harvey, Trédan, 2015); have arrangements with hackers (Dagiral, Parasie, 2011), writers, academics, and intellectuals (Pereira, 2011); organize work according to social media, data, and algorithmic dynamics (Lewis, Zamith, 2017); and make sense of search engine optimization (Sire, 2016) or a particular labor market (Pilmis, 2013). In short, more or less “integrated” actors deal

¹ This is how Hennion speaks of art worlds from Howard Becker's perspective (1989).

with other actors who may be described as “mavericks” (Becker, 1983) from other fields and it is by describing these examples of cooperation that we are left without a doubt that the worlds of journalism are evolving. It may be a question, then, of **describing the evolution of the worlds of journalism, past or present (AXIS 2)**: worlds that innovate, evolve, grow, lie dormant or even disappear when they come in contact with other social worlds, other entities—other “cosmoses,” as Latour would say (2006). They transform themselves in response to the emergence of new ways of doing (new techniques, devices, and skills) and new ways of seeing (social norms and ideologies).

Let’s not forget that **an analysis of journalism in terms of social worlds can help examine the worlds of journalism from the perspective of the users of news (AXIS 3)**. Strauss states that readers of a media within a social world or subworld do not constitute a discrete aggregate of people who do not share what they read (Anderson, 1983). He is convinced that readers are highly selective and that they react actively to what they read: *“The social world perspective reminds us that their participants may bring active perception and judgment as well as a great deal of knowledge and even study to the events of their social worlds. [...] Readers will be highly selective and actively responsive in their reading”* (Strauss, 1978, p. 126). Dominique Pasquier specifies that *“this analytical framework offers genuine potential to work on how media content is received. [...] It encourages a micro-level analysis. [...] It obliges us to deal with the problematic dimensions of the coordination processes and the dimensions of conflict of cooperative activities”* (Pasquier, 2004, p. 205). If we continue in the direction of the first two axes, we may be inclined to study media audiences and how they use and develop media content in their own world.

This issue aims to help clarify the relevance of the concept of social worlds and related principles (identity, career, culture, etc.) to the study of journalism. Submissions may take the form of original empirical studies and/or theoretical discussions of the possible applications of this perspective.

A recapitulation of the axes:

1. Who does what? Examine journalistic activity from the perspective of social worlds.
2. Consider evolution, change, and innovation in journalism from a social worlds perspective.
3. Discuss users and uses of news from a social worlds perspective.

The deadline for submitting the final manuscripts (30 to 50,000 characters, including notes and bibliography) is **March 15 2018, at the following email addresses:**

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Manuscripts may be written in **English, French, Portuguese or Spanish**.

Double blind review.

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The journal is a springboard for the publication of innovative works in transdisciplinary perspectives; it publishes the research not only of established scholars but also of students. Published online and on paper, the journal's issues are organized around precise themes. Results of graduate theses, field and research notes, and scholarly reports may also be included in any given issue.

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