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Call for Papers

***Journalism and Platforms :
From Symbiosis to Dependence***

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The internet has been less the scene of disintermediation, that some of its founders called for in the mid-1990s, than that of a reintermediation. The historical media players have taken their place alongside online news sites and new players in the media chain: search engines, digital social media, aggregators, and platforms. (Smyrniotis and Rebillard, 2019). These have in common the processing and publishing of content without producing it. Through their algorithms they organize and order what their users can see. They play a role that can be described as editorial, or meta-editorial, vis-à-vis access to news. It is this role, and more specifically the role played vis-à-vis the information produced by journalists, that we propose to question in this issue.

It seems all the more important to question what platforms are doing to journalism, and vice versa, especially now that access to news sites is mainly through mobile devices (AT-Internet, 2015; Pew, 2016; CMPA, 2017). But it happens that this mode of consumption tends to benefit the platforms, in particular the social media. They are increasingly creating news services, in native or embedded formats, such as Discover for Snapchat, Lives and Instant Articles for Facebook, Apple News or Accelerated Mobile Pages for Google, which sometimes do not redirect to the site of the media which has produced the news but hold users in their perimeter. In addition, these native formats on some social media, such as Facebook or Instagram or Twitter, see their visibility increased by the algorithm at the expense of conventional formats (external video insert or link to the media site). The platforms that began by proposing to be bridges between the users and the producers of news, ended up 'entrapping' users in their perimeter by offering them all kinds of contents.

Moreover, algorithms governing the selection and classification of information on these platforms are mostly opaque, which poses a political problem on the one hand, since we cannot be sure that some platforms are not partisan themselves, and an economic problem on the other hand, since these platforms may sometimes have a monetary advantage in benefiting the site of a partner without the user having a way of knowing this.

This substitution of news sites by platforms and the opacity of their algorithms are all the more problematic as the conditions of media uses have changed, making both users and publishers dependent on the platforms. When we consider that Google, Facebook and Twitter alone are the source of more than 70% of the traffic of US online press sites in 2017, we can get an idea of the extent of this media dependence. This platformization of the media (Poell et al., 2017) could lead, as a Tow Center for Digital Journalism report points out, to a migration of journalism away from the media and its full integration into the internet industry, which would transform 'online press' to a 'platform press' (Bell and Owen, 2017).

Among journalists, the initial enthusiasm for the positive impact of digital networks on media quickly turned into a fear of an 'Armageddon'¹ to come which would put an end to journalism as we know it². Indeed, the sociotechnical device of the platform that stands between the media and the public plays a major role in the construction of the editorial identity of the media organizations and their business models as well as in the evolution of journalistic practices. It also has a significant impact on the way journalists represent their readers but also the territories covered, especially at the local level (Bousquet, Marty, Smyrniaios, 2015).

Despite the increasing importance of the phenomenon since the mid-2000s little empirical research and longitudinal studies have been conducted on this trend until 2015, except for a few case studies (Aguila-Obra et al., 2007, Paterson and Domingo, 2008; Rebillard, 2009, Siapera, 2013). Recently, responding to the calls to refocus the research program in journalism and media studies beyond the borders of the media towards a sociotechnical approach (Lewis and Westlund, 2015) and especially towards the consideration of algorithmic systems (Napoli, 2014), there has been a wave of empirical studies on this topic (Tambini and Labo, 2016, Nechuchstai, 2017, Nielsen and Ganter, 2017, Tandoc Jr and Maitra, 2017; Marty, Pignard-Cheynel, Sebbah, 2016). Researchers also asked about the social and legal responsibility of the engineers who design the infomediation platforms with regard to the current news information (Grimmelmann, 2014), and the possible conflicts of interest which could generate 'incentives to bias' (Rieder and Sire, 2014).

This insistence on "*the importance of studying not only journalists, but also other actors such as managers, technologists, the public and external entities as platforms when they cause changes in the production of news*" (Kalogeropoulos and Nielsen, 2017, p.16) is welcome. In this vein, this issue of *About Journalism - About Journalism - Sobre Jornalismo* aims to contribute to the understanding of the impact that such structural changes can have on journalistic practices, on the editorial strategy of information producers, on the news information itself, on the uses of the public and on the economic, legal and political dimensions of the relationship between media and platforms. More specifically, we seek contributions that address some of the issues below:

- Changes in journalistic practices shaped by platforms
- Publishers' editorial and business strategies in adapting to platforms
- The mutation of the modalities of news collecting and reporting (formats, languages, hierarchies, storytelling) in this context.

¹ https://www.cjr.org/special_report/facebook-media-buzzfeed.php

² <https://medium.com/tow-center/the-end-of-the-news-as-we-know-it-how-facebook-swallowed-journalism-60344fa50962>

- Changes in access to information and consumption patterns by media audiences.
- The economic, legal and political issues of the relationship between media and platforms.
- Changes and continuities of the sociology of journalists in this context.

The deadline for submitting the final manuscripts (30 to 50,000 characters, including notes and bibliography) is **16 February 2020**, at:

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

Double blind review.

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