

Call for Papers

ICA Pre-Conference 2022

“From international news flows to platformization of journalism: global news diversity in perspective”

Date and Location: Thursday 26 May, 2022 at La Maison de la Recherche of Université Sorbonne Nouvelle (4, rue des Irlandais, 75005 Paris)

Division Affiliation: Global Communication and Social Change, Journalism Studies

Decades of research has demonstrated inequalities and imbalance in international news flows. Such research focused on news agencies, radio and 24-hour international TV news channels as a site for the projection of state soft power (Mattelart, 2014; Schiller, 1976); indeed, since their inception, news agencies have been close to political and economic power (see for AFP, Lefebure, 1996). Nonetheless, regardless of the size, political and economic influence of those global media, they remain small players compared to US tech giants like Google and Facebook (Ihlebaek & Schanke Sundet, 2021).

The platformization of news refers to the transformation of the platform-publisher relationship (Nielsen & Ganter, 2018), and is an approach which asks questions about the datafication of audiences, spaces for public deliberation and the differential responsibilities and accountability of the stakeholders involved (van Dijck et al., 2019). Platforms are not involved in news production, and news distribution is only (a tiny) part of their business. Described as a “corporate takeover of the digital world” (Smyrnaio, 2018), an oligopoly of platforms offers users access to information personalized and mediated by algorithms. Previous research about online news diversity demonstrates that more could mean less, where the abundant flows of news are contrasted with the lack of original news produced (Paterson, 2007; Rebillard & Loicq, 2013). The online flow of news from this view seems superfluous despite the promise of the internet to democratize and freely expand access to information and culture.

How are platforms contributing to this dynamic when they mediate news? The question of algorithmically-mediated visibility and access to journalism has become central (Bucher, 2018) whereas advertising platforms became the matchmakers between declared, supposed and inferred tastes of audiences on one side and news supply on the other side. Privately owned infrastructures of public life, platforms exercise a tremendous market and political power on public speech and political expression.

How accountable are tech giants regarding the construction and destruction of media economies and cultural industries? The power of platforms has led to calls for regulation to increase compliance with intellectual property laws, privacy laws (such as GDPR), antitrust, tax avoidance, and the dissemination of disinformation. A capability to disrupt news flow on a continental scale became clear in 2021 when Facebook and Google were targeted by Australian legislation designed to ensure payment for the news they distribute.

This one-day pre-conference on platformization of news seeks to answer, in light of previous research in critical political economy of international news flow, questions about the circulation of online news through platforms. We invite **extended abstracts (of no more than 800 words)** pertaining, but not limited to, the following topics:

- How can we imagine a “free and balanced circulation” of online news which would not be market-oriented or politically-controlled by States, but empowering for citizens and public debate?
- In what ways does algorithmic control over the circulation of news influence public debate?
- Do YouTube and other platforms actively contribute to information diversity? If so, in what ways, to what extent and with what limits? Do newer platforms such as TikTok or Snapchat contribute more to news diversity than more established platforms?
- How has the pandemic altered our understanding of the domination of platforms over news flows?
- What opportunities exist to resist or reform the grip of global platforms over the circulation of news? Do citizens/consumers support of restrictions or limitations on that influence?

Discussions are underway regarding a possible follow-on journal special issue.

References

- Bucher T. (2018) *If . . . Then: Algorithmic Power and Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ihlebaek K.A. & V. Schanke Sundet (2021), “Global platforms and asymmetrical power: Industry dynamics and opportunities for policy change”, *New media & society*, 1-18.
- Lefébure A. (1992), « Havas, les arcanes du pouvoir », Grasset, 410p.
- Mattelart T. (2014), « Les enjeux de la circulation internationale de l’information », *Revue française des sciences de l’information et de la communication*, 5. DOI: 10.4000/rfsic.1145
- Nielsen R. K. and S. A. Ganter. 2018. “Dealing with Digital Intermediaries: A Case Study of the Relations between Publishers and Platforms.” *New Media & Society* 20 (4): 1600–17.
- Paterson C., “International news on the internet: Why more is less”, *The International Journal of Communication Ethics*, vol. 4, n° 1/2, 2007, p. 57-66
- Rebillard F. & M. Loicq (eds.) (2013), *Pluralisme de l’information et media diversity. Un état des lieux international*, De Boeck.
- Schiller H. I. (1976), *Communications and Cultural Domination*, New York, M.E. Sharpe.
- Smyrnaioi N. (2018), *Internet Oligopoly. The Corporate Takeover of Our Digital World*, Emerald Publishing, 191p.
- Van Dijck J., D. Nieborg, and T. Poell. 2019. “Reframing Platform Power.” *Internet Policy Review* 8 (2): 18.

To participate

Please upload an extended abstract of no more than 800 words (excluding references) at the address below by **15 February, 2022**. Abstracts will be assessed by members of the scientific committee and outcomes will be communicated by 15 March, 2022. Full-length manuscripts (for discussants to provide feedback on) are due to pre-conference contact, Alan Ouakrat (alan.ouakrat@sorbonne-nouvelle.fr), by 6 May, 2022.

For more information and to submit an abstract go to: <https://ica-globalnews.sciencesconf.org> .
For any questions, please contact: alan.ouakrat@sorbonne-nouvelle.fr

Registration is required. Further information will be sent to registered participants ahead of the pre-conference date. Registration will be available through the ICA website from February 2022.

Organizers

- Alan Ouakrat, Assistant Professor, Media Studies, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle (FR)
- Chris Paterson, Professor, School of Media and Communication, University of Leeds (UK)
- Franck Rebillard, Professor, Media Studies, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle (FR)
- Jasmin Surm, Doctoral Student, School of Media and Communication, University of Leeds (UK)

Scientific Committee

- Philippe Bouquillion, Professor, Communication Studies, Université Sorbonne Paris Nord (FR)
- David Hesmondhalgh, Professor, School of Media and Communication, Media Studies, University of Leeds (UK)
- Florence Le Cam, Journalism Studies, ULB Brussels (BE)
- Tristan Mattelart, Professor, Media Studies, Université Paris 2 (FR)
- Terhi Rantanen, Professor, Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics and Political Science (UK)
- Marta Severo, Professor, Communication Studies, Université Paris Nanterre (FR)
- Nikos Smyrniotis, Professor, Media Studies, Université de Toulouse (FR)