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# The Rising of the Journalist-Managers: Changing Institutional Logics in the Field of French Journalism? Leads to Analyze the Change of the French Daily Hard News Press Business Model

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper aims to point out and highlight the specific features of a segment of the French media landscape: the daily hard news press. For two decades but dramatically for a few years French daily newspapers face a big turmoil that mainly concerns economics and management issues: continuous readership erosion, decreasing advertising revenues, continuous growing costs of circulation, etc. According to some practitioners and scholars, the classical business model of this segment of press appears now to be inquired or even redefined in order to face new challengers and market needs. In fact some hard news newspapers are involved in a process of redefining their business model. We can indeed rise up some beginnings of an economic and managerial change within those newspapers: a “managerialization process”. We assume this managerialization could be mainly personified and carried on by journalist-managers. However this institutional change appears to be implemented through various forms considering each newspaper and slowly because of strong and structuring patterns shaping this field.

In this paper we would point out the beginnings and assumptions of this slow managerialization process and propose the leads to analyze the institutional change of the business model of the French daily hard news press, in a short and middle-term forecast. Previously we would highlight insights of the specific business model of the hard news press, then insert this process in the environment of the French media field and the specific culture of this field that compose some strong constraints to major institutional change.

**Keywords:** hard news press, managerialization, business model, institutional change, change resistance, newsroom management

## PAPER

This paper aims to present the first findings of an on-going doctoral work that concerns on the analysis of institutional change within the French market of the news media and hard

news press, and especially the print press. This paper deals with the whole research question of Media Management and Economics which is deeply inquired by specialist academic scholars for two decades [in the tracks of some studies and textbooks: Picard 1989, 2002, Albarran 1996, Alexander et al. 1998, Albarran, Chan-Olmsted, and Wirth 2006] and focuses on contemporary newspaper business models and newsroom management. As well as very few academic studies are published on newspapers' newsroom management and major senior scholars state that more academic analyses should be developed [Albarran 2006: 13], this academic issue – the hard news press business model – is a renewed interest by a more practice-orientation [Picard 2006a].

## SOME OUTCOMES OF STUDIES ON NEWSPAPER AND NEWSROOM MANAGEMENT

Newspaper management exists as a professional and academic issue since 1930s [Hornberger and Miller 1930, Pollard 1937, Rigby 1950, Wood 1952, Thayer 1954, Rucker and Williams 1955 for the first ones...] as well as studies on newsroom management [Engwall 1978, Gans 1978 (2004), Rankin 1986, Giles 1987, Willis 1988, Fink 1988]<sup>1</sup>. Following major works on newspaper management will stress the basic question I study here: the change processes in newspaper organization and newsroom and journalists' management as well as craft and profession of journalist and their professional practices [Kalleberg and al. 1987a,b; Underwood 1993; Picard 1998]. Following contemporary approaches to media management and especially in newspaper management [Albarran 2006] we can point that, due to the recentness of these works developed only for mid 1990s and this issue focused on managerial problems to be solved, this academic field remains limited in terms of both its practical and particularly its theoretical contributions: most of these studies are descriptive. These works are mainly focused on top management and neither on middle management nor journalists; methodologies employed rely almost exclusively on traditional qualitative research methods (personal interviews, and secondary research sources). As pointed by Mierzejewska and Hollifield [2006], the outcomes of management decisions and behaviors beyond financial performance and organizational efficiency measures. Nevertheless we can draw outlines of theoretical directions of academic studies in this sub field – newspaper and journalism management.

About interpretation on influences of economic and managerial logics on publications'

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<sup>1</sup> For a review of some first academic studies on newspaper management, see Willey [1930], "Review: News and the Newspaper", *Social Forces*, vol.9 (2): 276-278

contents and journalistic practices, on-going literature on effects and critics on market-driven journalism is quite separated in two movements [Beam 2003]: in one hand, some researchers state market-driven journalism is responsible for the “trivialization of media content” and deprive readers of the hard news content [Underwood 1993, McManus 1994]; in other hand, we notice supporters of the market-driven journalism process seen as a positive effect of the managerialisation or marketisation process at work in the US print press and hard news media that “help save newspapers” [in particular Meyer 1985, Lavine and Wackman 1988].

Our research question and goals are convergent to the agenda set by Albarran [2006] who invites scholars involved in media management issues to develop academic researches that take into consideration the macro and global implications, that are rigorous in the sense that they are theoretically grounded and methodologically sound, study business and organizational models, interplay among management, economic, social, and regulatory forces. It's also convergent with the study of different US contemporary newspapers lead by Sylvie and Whitterspoon [2002]: like what we aim to do, they inquire the role of change – especially the role of products and people as change agents – in the newspaper industry, highlight the causes of organizational change in newspaper, and provide a explanatory model that let to respond to change needs.

## THE FRENCH TURMOIL OF THE HARD NEWS PRESS

Moreover this research interest is closely akin to a non-academic issue: for many years, more and more print newspapers as well as definition and approach of press and journalism, especially print press and hard news journalism, are in turmoil in France like many other countries in a way [Picard 2006b,c]. This study is conducted at a critical moment for the French daily newspaper industry: the “crisis of the French daily press” takes roots in the definition and implementation of newspapers’ business models. Because those newspapers are the primary recruiters of degrees from journalism schools, we underscore the correlation between the crisis of this press and the issue of education and training (future) journalists [Pélissier et Ruellan 2003, Lardeau 2006]. Those business models don't give the predominance to economic and financial sides but give a main attention to editorial and journalistic issues: the assumption is that newspaper editorial and content are most important than other issues and newspaper economics is secondary and driven by contents. Most of French daily newspapers remain based on this assumption unlike the rest of the press and media (i.e. magazine press, TV, etc.).

As Picard pointed for the whole newspapers situation, we can draw the same report for

the French case: “The long time successful newspaper business model is coming under pressure (...) and very few innovations occur in the business model category.” [Picard 2006c: 5, 9]. One of the specific sides of this issue is economic: most of the French daily newspapers that are in a structural crisis face need to redefine their business models. Most of national newspapers face economic and business turmoil for many years and dramatically in recent months<sup>2</sup>. *France Soir*, known to be the highest circulating daily in the 1950's and 1960's, has been sold for several times these years and fails to find an editorial positioning as well as successful business model. *L'Humanité*, the daily communist newspaper, has to call regularly and publicly their readers and shareholders for money. *Libération*, the left-wing daily founded by a Marxist-Leninist promoting ideas against capitalism and free market economy, has a new owner for a couple of years who is one the most influential private banker, a Rothschild family member. *Le Monde*, who still remains running mainly (by the law) by its journalists through an association which is the first shareholder, is also highly dependant of other shareholders (private groups) and their bankers because of its critical financial situation. And this financial dependence is not without consequences on editorial positioning [Mauduit 2007]. Both economic and financial dailies are also in big turmoil for some months: the former owner of *La Tribune* recently acquired its competitor *Les Echos* and thus had to sell the first one (due to non-monopolistic rules).

A major reason that could explain this situation is the weak attention given by the hard news press people to economic and business administration of media and press firms [Eveno 2003]. Thus, the first question was the following: why no fundamental change has occurred in the declining daily French hard news business to take seriously account business and professional issues and consequently to redefine products and business policies?

Here we have to notice existence of two kind of business and organizational models of news media from an over-deciding indicator: time and dead-line. We have to consider radically two different daily news media according their business model built on the nature of news that mainly fill the content of the newspaper issue. Those for which time and dead-line are modeling journalistic practices and products production (daily newspapers, and in a way some weekly newsmagazines, news broadcasts: Gans 1978) and consequently modeling business models and organizational designs. And those for which time pressure is not the most prevailing constraint. In the first case, we include most of hard news media; and soft news in the second case. We do limit our study to a part of the journalistic and media field: the hard news press which is very specific due to this field is not fully concerned

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<sup>2</sup> French hard news dailies market has 8 not-free general-news dailies: *L'Humanité*, *Libération*, *Le Monde*, *Aujourd'hui-Le Parisien*, *La Croix*, *Le Figaro*, *France Soir*, *Présent*, plus 2 economic and financial dailies *Les Echos*, *La Tribune*, plus 4 free dailies (*20 Minutes*, *Metro*, *Matin Plus*, *Direct Soir*). Moreover 2 sports dailies (*L'Equipe* focused on general sports news, and *Paris-Turf* dedicated to horse-race news).

by the managerialisation process (on contrary to the magazine press for instance). Hard news press is distinctive from soft news press and gathers media which content is mainly focused on collective issues (breaking news and news on politics, economics, society, international news and culture) in opposition with soft news that mainly deal with and focus on individual and personal issues (show-business, entertainment, leisure, sports, etc.) [Tuchman 1972, 1973, 1978; Bogart 1985, 2002; Patterson 2000; Scheufele 2002; Plasser 2005; Baird 2006]. As a final preliminary insight, we mention that even if both types of news media face hard competition and fundamental needs to adapt their firms and products to social change, news media models based on soft news are currently more successful than hard news media [Charon 1999, 2003, 2005; Le Floch et Sonnac 2005]. This research question leads us to provide a systematic analysis, in business administration, of economic and organizational models in hard news press industry, in order to highlight the prevailing and over deciding variables of those models and institutional change process (managerialization process). The last aim is to offer the better representation of this industry, it's necessary to draw the environment of this industry, in particular by drawing the process of globalization of ideas, management rules and corporate governance, economy policies in which the French media industry is belonging or its depends.

In this paper we firstly propose an extensive approach of the newspapers' business model that better suits to depict and explain the specific French hard news press field; then we present the global framework (and the research design) used in this study before analyzing the first major findings concerning the research question. Finally we invite to discuss those findings, and then to highlight the further steps and suggestions for future research on this topic.

## 1. NSIGHTS OF THE FRENCH DAILY HARD NEWS PRESS BUSINESS MODEL

### **1.1. The Relevance of the Concept of Media Firm Business Model**

Several different approaches of business models exist according the academic disciplines they refer, mainly in economics and business administration. Many scholars involved in media economics and management studies suggest definitions of business models for media, and especially for the print press and newspapers [Picard 1989, 2002, 2006c, Albarran 1996, Alexander and al. 1998]. As a basic definition, a business model could be described as an intellectual construction or an empirical model designed by a firm to underscore how this firm runs its business and in particular it sustains financially by

underscore its sources of revenue. As Picard notices [2002: 25-26], business model should not be confused with the company strategy because this notion is much more fundamental than the second one: *“a business model involves the conception of how the business operates, its underlying foundations, and the exchange activities and financial flows upon which it can be successful. Business models can be described as the architecture for product, service, and information flows, including a description of various business activities and their roles. They include a description of the potential benefits for the various business actors and the sources of revenues”*.

Because a business model concerns the bases upon which firms conduct business, this concept is designed to draw the more accurate picture, at a specific moment, of the core competences and fundamentals of costs and sources of revenues. Thus this picture is not steady and this definition varies according the major evolution of the market or the media firm inquired. Not only in a very long-term perspective (as described by Picard [2002: 31] for newspapers) but also in a more short-term run with the rising of new media that develops their own business models which have nothing in common with daily newspapers [Picard 2000]<sup>3</sup>.

Another consequence concerns the notion of successfulness that need to be debated. This notion could indeed imply a normative slant in the appreciation of a business model, and its efficiency as a research concept. The risk of ‘normativity’ can be wrecked by the both following arguments: first, as we noticed previously, a business model is not steady and thus this concept could not postulate a taken for granted configuration that could not evolve. Second, one can mention that business model is a research concept and, like other research concepts, this is an intellectual construction drawn by a scholar, a tool mainly designed to understand how works, run a firm. Moreover this concept, as defined by major scholars in our academic domain, implies to sort between components of a firm in order to select only the prevailing variables. We can state that this concept is near the notion of ideal-type as defined by Max Weber and developed by subsequent scholars<sup>4</sup>. And like an ideal-type (that is a non steady framework) the major contribution of the concept of business model is to draw a basic but useful framework that allows underscoring the fundamentals of a firm, an economic field or a business occupation.

Like other concept, this one would be seen only as a research tool that has to be distinguished of the epistemological and ultimate goal of the research defined by the scholar.

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<sup>3</sup> For an economic analysis of the online media business models in France with a special focus on the quest for profitability, see Danielle Attias [2006], “The impact of organization choices. The case of French online newspapers”, Research paper ESNIE 2006: <http://esnie.u-paris10.fr/en/archives/2006.php?id=174>

<sup>4</sup> Besides books by Weber, see Bendix [1977], *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait*, Berkeley, University of California Press (orig.ed: 1960).

This is the scholar who decide or not to be involved in a normative approach. Therefore the successfulness (that could be turned in a normative approach or not) is only a component, a tool among others variables of the business model and not the carrier of a predefined approach. Consequently, the notion of successfulness *per se* could not infer here that the business model implies a teleological approach.

However scholars have pointed out the core components of this concept. Within this perspective, Picard [2006c] describes the meta-business model which is thus context-independent and potentially universal. *“It provides a constant foundation on which to build contextually relevant, specific but dynamic business models. This meta-model is based on a concept of business explained by three interrelated strands which are the (1) way of thinking, (2) operational system, and (3) capacity for value generation. These strands are interdependent.”* In this perspective Picard underscores two major components that are heuristic to define accurately a media firm business model: workflows and value chain. Workflow concerns a description of “the work that takes place and the resources that are required to complete each stage” [Picard 2002: 26], and value chain “show the value that is added to a product or service at each step of its acquisition, transformation, management, marketing sales, and distribution“ [id: 30].

As suggested in many studies [Picard 2006c] this definition of the concept of business model appears very useful to describe accurately and understand the fundamentals of main media firms. Although we would propose here a more extensive approach of business model that better suits to media we inquired: the French hard news press newspapers. In fact we state the above definition is not sufficient to underscore all prevailing structural variables that shape this sub-field constrained by numerous components belonging some different fields.

## **1.2. The Case for an Extensive Approach of Business Model for the French Hard News Dailies**

By using the concept of business model described above we state that the representation draw of the hard news dailies would be incomplete and, to an extent, biased. This statement based on first extensive findings in our research doesn't mean we reject the concept of business model as built by previous colleagues because of its inefficiency.

However we acknowledge that the current definition of newspaper firm business model is a product of empirical case studies and research mainly based on media firms belonging to States, societies and environments which seem very different in their patterns from the specific French sub-field market. In this perspective this definition of business model seems to suit very well in a free competitive market or society and/or in market and societies that



are – more or less – autonomous or self-governing (we mean they run themselves mainly by their own rules of the game) and actually weak interdependent with powerful institutions (individuals or organizations), such as central State, public services, that could modify or interact with the rules of the game in the media fields. On the contrary this approach of business model doesn't appear as a heuristic tool when it used in a national economy characterized by the existence of powerful and numerous constraints that push down on firms' work and business activities, like in France and especially in the field of hard news press.

So, as we described the fundamentals of hard news press system below (see part 3), this market is very complex to understand by using the business model as currently defined. In this manner however components of workflows and value chain are useful, they don't appear sufficient to underscore and explain (even in brief) the following acknowledgments among the prevailing (draw for quite two decades now in Charon 1991): a continuous erosion of circulation and readership; a weak competition in the sub-market of national dailies and even and quite non-competition in the sub-market of regional dailies (see below, part 3) although the magazine press industry is highly dynamic and competitive; a gap (or a misunderstanding) between journalists and their Public, readership; ownership of numerous national and regional dailies is not dependant upon media groups (like it does in many countries) but rather dependant upon holdings or firms involved in a primarily economic field that matter nothing common with the media economics and professional culture (banks and bankers, religious organization, weapons factory firm, etc.) However in the same time, a greater attention is given by newspapers' owners and top managers to the economics (updating the business model) and management (promote better management policies within their organization) issues seen now as fundamental to care. But how explain that so few changes occurred within the last 20 years?

If one uses the business model as defined above and therefore focusing on major components, one acknowledges that the business model of most of hard news dailies is not successful because those newspapers are structurally now in debt and consequently they are no profitable. Another illustration can be made with the gap between journalists and readership: if the classical business model is able to show it, we argue this can't describe exactly why and how this gap exists although these issue (proximity with the market, in particular with readership is fundamental for newspapers' economics)... And we could conclude in the same way about the issue of the weak non-competition that features those markets.

Thus we use the concept as described but we suggest extending it by adding other components<sup>5</sup> to the classical definition of business model in order to manage a useful

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<sup>5</sup> Of course we care that this concept should be as simple and clear as possible in order to be used as a flexible

concept for the specific case of French hard news dailies... Our suggests are the both following:

Without weighted it, adding two major components to existing ones (workflow, chain value, financial and business fundamentals): the basis of newspaper firm culture and the basis of the professional model of journalism. We assume that both notions could help to better understand how and why the business model of the specific hard news dailies works (or doesn't work by itself...) Indeed, according to that, some of the failing parts or components of this business model could be draw and explains (even briefly at first): the specific prevailing culture in hard news press is not focused on the economics and the financial profitability of their newspapers (very few journalists are aware about that and even the idea by which a good journalism can only exist in financially poor newspapers still remains widely held!).

Insert the business model in its surrounding environment in order to underscore the numerous and strong interdependence that link the hard news dailies market and other fields (in which powerful non-journalistic institutions have strong influence in the newspapers' market).

### **1.3 Implications of the Extensive Concept of Business Model**

This extensive approach of business model appears heuristic and useful not only to underscore the fundamentals of hard news dailies' economics but also to nurture our theoretical framework that mainly pertain to the neo-institutionalist school. First we defend the following methodological way draw from our current research: as much as possible, we state that a better understanding of newspaper economics – and its business model – could be found, once business model defined, by testing it on the ground, through empirical fieldwork within newspapers, their newsrooms and governance boards. Thus because we experience this suggest in our current fieldwork with probing results, we argue that direct observations inside newspapers' buildings (in newsrooms and other departments) even for a short period is useful for scholars in order to feel specific newspapers' firm cultures and their deep implication in the economics and business.

Second this business model is a tool that leads us to connect our specific research question and the field inquired. This concept is very dynamic and could even be included in the socio-history perspective I use. Within this perspective business model, combined with other concepts, could be integrated with relevance in a 3-level analysis (micro level, meso level, and macro level). Because business model concept is designed to underscore the

underlying fundamentals and variables that depend on different level scopes, institutions (organizations, individuals, practices...) and field (media, political, economy...), this concept indeed allows highlighting variables on micro level (journalists and their practices within the newsroom), meso level (the media industry in national market), and macro level (international scope).

Moreover this concept appears more heuristic than the study of newspapers' firm strategy policies: because the newspapers' economics is not a point for this industry in France (see below part 3), newspapers' company strategies are very difficult to underscore and explain because some of them are not well-designed and above all difficult to rebuild for a scholar (we experience and face currently, in our fieldwork, the refuse by newspapers' owners and top managers to let me access to data about financial and strategic policies). One of our aims in the current research is indeed to gather this kind of data and information for some major dailies in order to nurture the existing ones<sup>6</sup> and contribute to define more accurately the dailies' business models and economics fundamentals. This approach leads us to underscore the real variables that shape this sub-market and weight them in a systematic study: thus we plan to criticize discourses promoted by the journalists or practitioners themselves that strive to explain for instance the structural crisis and turmoil of the hard news press. A lot of those discourses and stories state that responsibility is not located in their profession [Fogiel et Patino 2005]; in the same way owners and shareholders often point out the responsibility of their journalists to explain the resistance of managerial and professional change... All this kind of self-justifications don't let to depict a systematic, non-slanted and extensive description of all process and institutions (organizations and individuals) with their weighted influence which are involved in this specific hard news press dailies' field and the institutional and managerial change (and its resistance) whose beginnings of a managerialisation process do break out.

## 2. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: THE NEO-INSTITUTIONALIST APPROACH<sup>7</sup>

The current research takes part in the neo-institutionalism paradigm or school in the field

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<sup>6</sup> The public service organization (Direction du Développement des Médias) which monitors the media business for the public bodies (Government, Parliament, Civil services...) edit each year an extensive report on print press (with data on circulation, readership...) but it gives not detailed data on each newspaper or magazine (it only focuses on market segment). Jean-Marie Charon, one of the best specialists of media who publish extensively, is not able to provide such kind of financial and strategic data that remain classified information. Scholars have therefore to build sketch of business model with data gathered from various ways and sources...

<sup>7</sup> In this short paper, we can't provide an extensive presentation of the neo-institutional theory (which could be

of research in management and organization studies. We propose in this chapter some insights of this framework that let to understand the fundamentals of the approach, core tools and above all its justification and relevance for this research.

## 2.1. The Core Elements of the Neo-Institutional Approach

As Djelic [2001: 9-10] notes, the neo-institutional approach is “a theoretical framework that would take on complexities, including a priori conflicting developments. A revised version of the neo-institutional argument, combining a ‘theory of constraint’ with a ‘theory of action’ and enlarging the embedding environment to its geopolitical dimension appeared to fit the historical and empirical material best.” (...) Institutional or neo-institutional arguments (...) underscore the cultural nature of embedding national environment (...). National culture has been defined (...) as a historically constructed system of reference embodied in a set of basic practices. [It] (d)escribe economies and industries as being deeply embedded within national institutional environments, understood as constraining framework of an essentially structural nature. Within this perspective, the state and political institutions are key elements of the constraining framework (...)”

The major goal that sustains the neo-institutional school [Djelic 2001: 14] consists in “articulat(ing) a system of institutional constraints with individual choices and actions. Framework reconciling partial determination with the possibility of unexpected change and unforeseen evolution. Individuals may indeed have a strong impact on systems of institutional constraints if they belong to or weave networks that can amplify their decisions, increase their capacity to implement those decisions, and widen the span of their action. Intervention of individual actors through such mechanisms undeniably represents one potential source of unexpected change and unforeseen evolution<sup>8</sup>.”

Within this perspective scholars tend to point out how the action of individuals and institutions are embedded and highly interdependent each other. And notably in France, the most powerful and constraining institution is the central State (the French central state play a major role in the news media field: see *infra*). Empirical cases highlight also an isomorphism trend within an institutional field: institutions that belong to the same field (for instance, here, the daily national hard news press) are therefore subject to the same pressures, constraints, rules and norms [Powell and DiMaggio 1991, Dacin 1997]. This isomorphism is particular evident in the case of the news media and particularly in the daily

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besides divided in two historical steps). For further readings and references on this school, see Powell and DiMaggio [1991], and Djelic and Quack [2008], *Handbook of Institutional Theory* (forthcoming).

<sup>8</sup> The neo-institutional school takes partly its roots in a theoretical and epistemological struggle against the individualistic neo-classical approach of the firm and the human behavior [Powell and DiMaggio 1991].

hard news press: the editors of the “Journal télévisé de 20 heures” (the 8 o'clock TV news), the news program which is the most viewed by the French, on the channels TF1 and France2, acknowledge that the content of the news is partly shaped by the last issue of the newspaper *Le Monde* (the most influential news media in France) and, this is new, for a couple of years by also the last morning issue of *Aujourd'hui-Le Parisien* (the national popular quality newspaper).

Moreover numerous case studies and national studies (in a wide range of social sciences) show that the more durable are the institutions, the more they are able to resist changing. Nevertheless, within this neo-institutional perspective, this resistance to change doesn't imply that individual actors (nested in networks: Granovetter 1985, Djelic 2004, or not...) are not able to introduce some change within an institutional system or field and to initiate a wider change within the field [Kleiner 2003].

### **2.1.1. The relevance of neo-institutional framework**

We can point out two major reasons in using neo-institutionalism theory to analyze this specific French industry and our research question.

The first is to study a particular issue with a broad approach that allows to link 3 levels of analysis and tend to give them, as a variable, their just weighting in the field: micro-level (cognitive factors: actors and decision-making), meso-level (firm and organization) and macro-level (upper environment: state and international scope) [Thornton 2004]. Even we focus on actors' behavior and motivations (i.e. by focusing mainly on decision-making), this approach implies to link them with meso and macro variables without deciding, a priori, some meso or macro variables totally explain the micro reality surveyed. The aim is to insert individual behavior in their environment [Djelic and Quack 2003] that explain it, more or less, and let open the opportunity to give some psychological explanations and motivations that could not be totally shaped by environment or cultural variables. This environment could be drawn by means of the socio-history paradigm [Noiriel 2006, Djelic 1998]. For instance, by defining the socio-historical context of an organization or a field, we can observe at micro-level some concepts or behaviors as leadership sources, power struggle between actors, decision-making process, the managers' attention, etc [Thornton and Ocasio 1999, Thornton 2004].

The second reason relies on our core research question: the aim to highlight a managerialization process that is one of the core concept and issue analyzed mainly by neo-institutionalist scholars. Therefore this thought school has developed some relevant tools (concepts and framework) for newsrooms' studies like institutional logics, isomorphism between actors and firms, actors' attention and decision-making process.

According to principles of neo-institutional theory, the researcher recovers its full and complete role: trends and mainstream in theory, paradigms and conceptual frameworks aren't dominant and the prevailing role is those of researcher who has to build the most appropriate conceptual framework able to describe and explain the reality surveyed. It mainly relies on the researcher to determine which is the prevailing or over deciding variable explaining institutional change or resistances [Djelic and Ainamo 1999] or institutional durability and change [Clemens and Cook 1999].

Thus we consider the neo-institutional theory is an outstanding framework that gives to the scholar at the same time flexibility and relevance to inquire such research questions that link three levels of study (micro, meso and macro) and study complex network relationships between individuals, organizations, field rules, in a double scope (national and international).

## **2.2. Institutional logics, Managerialization, Actor-focused approach, and Change Process**

In order to give an empirical substance to those issues, the major neo-institutional empirical studies, scholars try to identify process (that give a more dynamical and dialectic approach to their studies, and therefore try to avoid static or only positivist episteme in order to grasp the complexity of institutional change) and then highlight some particular phenomenon, behaviors, and trends like homogenization/standardization process, convergence/divergence process, coercion/imitation process [Dezalay et Garth 1998, Djelic 2004]. In this paper, we focus on concepts that are major tools used within this framework: institutional logics, managerialization process, the individual actor embedded in his field or sector, and change process. We postulate that those concepts are relevant: they are heuristic tools and concepts in particular to study very deeply the life and managerial change within newsrooms of hard news media.

We aim here to bring prevailing institutional logics within this market out and study the economic and organizational change process within the newspapers business, especially the hard news one. Friedland and Alford [1991: 248] claim that each key social institution has its own central logic. Authors define institutional logics as a "set of material practices and symbolic constructions". Those institutional logics are seen as structural patterns and forces - shaping rules, decisions and behaviors actors' and organizations' within a field or a society. This concept of institutional logics articulates cultural values, social and economic environment structures with structuring rules and norms of organizations and markets [Thornton, Jones, and Kury 2005]. Are these institutional logics, which shape practices of journalistic craft and training in media economics and management too, the beginnings of an economic and organizational change in the French hard news media and journalistic field,

the beginnings of a managerialisation process within this industry, craft and profession?

The managerialization process is highly correlated with a brother concept: the marketization. Although definitions of those concepts are closed, a major difference can be established. According to Djelic [2006: 53-54], the “marketization implies a redefinition of economic rules of the game but also a transformed perspective on states, regulation, and their role” and “refers both to market ideologies (reflects the beliefs that markets are of superior efficiency for the allocation of goods and resources), and market-oriented reforms (policies fostering the emergence and development of markets and weakening, in parallel, alternative institutional arrangements”. Here we prefer implementing the concept of managerialization, even if this concept is built on the marketization and is on debt of it. This concept of managerialization indeed allow us not to focus our study on market-orientation, which is weak for major newspapers inquired, and appears more heuristic to give a wider picture of the in-progress institutional change by giving a special focus (but not only) on organization and people management and on the daily-life working of the journalist-managers within their newsroom.

This managerialization process which is interdependent of an economic liberalization process [Djelic 1998] is today worldwide global and affects quite all the business industries in the open-market economies and countries. This managerialisation process is translated into an interdependent adoption of corporate governance, firms' organizational design, and redefined business models market-oriented linked with professional practices. This movement is particularly well-studied in economic and business markets, which are (or were) by nature or historically spared economic liberalization, in particular cultural industries [Jones and Thornton 2005] and industries based on an intellectual or artistic activity like publishing, architecture, consulting, art and fashion industry, public utilities and civil service, health, education<sup>9</sup>... Academic studies on this process show a transfer, a shift between two professional business cultures: from a professional and traditional culture – which is primarily characterized by professional actors' attention focused on craft and product – to new professional culture – which is major characterized by market-oriented and finance-oriented attention and practices.

Patricia Thornton [1999, 2004, 2005] studied how the managerialization process occurred in the US higher education publishing by changing the prevailing institutional logics that shape the publishing business: from a period defined by professional logics towards another period mainly defined by market logics. She demonstrates how this business is

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<sup>9</sup> See e.g. on publishing [in France: Chiapello 1998, in the USA: Thornton and Occasio 1999, Thornton 2004], architecture [Thornton, Jones, and Kury 2005], consulting [McKenna, Djelic, and Ainamo 2003], fashion [Djelic, and Ainamo 1999], health [Golden, Dukerich, and Fabian 2000; Kitchener 2002], education [Amdam and al. 2003], public utilities and civil service, ...

evolving from a professional culture (mainly shaped by the search of keeping up with editorial goals which are primarily defined in the personal relationship between editor and writer designed to publish books recognized as real intellectual contribution) towards a new culture more shaped by managerial and marketing interests (where the most important goals for editors are to improve the profitability of the publishing house and books are tools or ways to reach this goal). Thornton shows how the market logics impose its capitalistic rationalization to this market. In the publishing industry professional logics are defined as the logics that lead the publishing house owner to satisfy his main objective: building a deep and strong relationship (professional and personal sometimes if any) with “his” writers. And at this period, the main business goal is to publish the books – acknowledged by all the sector individuals – as the best intellectual contribution. In a way we can say that at this period the personal, professional and business goals are convergent in focusing on the same interest. On the contrary market logics describe a situation rather different: nowadays most of the publishing houses, governed by professional managers, are focused to reach firstly economic and financial goals. Then the legitimacy and the sustainability of a US higher education publishing firm depends more on market results (circulation, benefits...) than its ability to publish books that could be acknowledged as intellectual and cultural major contribution for the society. She contributes a lot in academic research by analyzing how cultural (and economic) changes within the publishing field shape the decision-making process of individuals, in order to highlight which and how institutional logics contribute to shape major decisions within the organization. Thus she develops the concept of (cognitive) attention of publishing managers to inquire on what problems, issues and solutions are focused decisions’ managers within the decision-making process.

The press and news industry, especially the French daily one, is now strongly affected by (institutional) logics which drive hard news press to adapt its business model to market conditions. This evolution or shift affects professional practices of journalists, business model, newspapers’ and newsrooms’ organizational designs, management practices, business policies and strategies, etc. The matter of media firm economics and finance is neither frequently issued nor deeply analyzed by journalists themselves: we argue here that the reason is deeply rooted in socio-historical genesis and development of the French press and journalism that shows the predominance of contents and editorial issues to the detriment of economic ones. From the beginnings of the print press industry, this issue is a matter of struggle between all actors involved in media and journalism fields: State, unions, journalists, professional organizations, owners and shareholders, printers, print press salesmen, press supply chain people, etc.



## 2.3. Hypotheses and Research Design

One of the main interests of the neo-institutionalism theory is offering the opportunity to study convergences and divergences process that characterized a plural institutional environment. We consequently insert this specific market studied in the global environment, the French media industry, in order to show the interdependence of environment and the specific market in one hand, the interdependence of process of globalization and national industries and markets, which are affected in other hand. Djelic and Quack [2003] point two interdependent postulates or statements useful to study the specific consequences of globalization process on national institutions: national institutions remain strong, especially those are structural of the society; but those national institutions are flexible and could be influenced and partly evolutive because no institutions could be considered as non-evolutive [Djelic 1998, Djelic and Ainamo 2005]. The media and news journalism field and their economics and managerial issues are constitutive of a good example of this kind of analyze: because this field depends on several institutional fields and logics (national economy, professional model and rules, hard news sub-market...) and because of the growing and shaping structural constraints: the key role of the French State, the strong and historical relationships between media, political and economical fields, a strong resistance to change, etc.

### 2.3.1. Basic Hypotheses

Part of neo-institutionalist studies, the study of the present research question has to be developed from hard and relevant hypotheses drawn from comparison between our specific study field and dimensions and findings in academic studies developed by neo-institutionalist works focused on institutional changes especially in cultural industries, and other schools of thought. We try to observe, define and analyze the process of managerialisation and marketization [Djelic 2006] of the French hard news press industry. This process mainly consists in diffusion of organizations management rules and practices in industry business or economic fields which are not traditionally defined or passed through strong managerialisation or marketization process. Here we have to notice a precision: we deal with managerialisation and marketization process which consists in giving a prevailing or first attention to market needs, financial objectives and economic profitability [Thornton 2004]. We deal with a prevailing focus and not one variable among many: we know indeed that, even in hard news press, economic and business issues are taking into account from the beginnings [Martin 1992, Eveno 2003]. But we do the following hypothesis: those economic, business and financial issues still matter but playing a more important role enough to

become prevailing variable which shape business and organizational models of hard news press. If hard news is highly dependant on economic revenues (from advertising in particular) and profitability from its beginnings, we can infer from the recent evolution of the whole media field that French hard news press is involved in a more economic global process which implies to insert this specific field in its environment (national, regional and international), as suggest us neo-institutionalism paradigm [Powell and DiMaggio 1991].

From the study of the socio-history of the French press and media field [Charon 1991] combined with studies on the same research question within other business or professional field (in particular developed within the neo-institutional paradigm), we can infer the following hypothesis: in a short or middle-run term, prevailing logics within French hard news press industry will change, from professional/editorial ones towards managerial/economic logics through a deep cultural change.

At a second level of hypothesis, we can assume this change isn't definitive nor in a one-way dynamic process: news media organizations would 'create' their own hybrid organizational, professional and economic model [Djelic and Ainamo 1999] combining both editorial and economic institutional logics.

Then we aim to underscore which institutions (organizations and individuals actors: Kleiner 2003) are initiating, leading and rising this economic and managerial change and how those organizations and individuals can go beyond constraints and resistance to change in order to carry on new economic and management ideas and policies. We put the hypothesis that this institutional change in progress is (or could be) mainly carried out by specific individuals: the journalist-managers whose I defined as journalists who daily manage in the same time a second duty (besides journalistic one) in management (newsroom unit management, employee management, involvement in marketing duties or in strategic issues, etc.)

### **2.3.2. Research Design and Methods**

This research is involved in an interpretative approach. Thus we try to identify, underline and understand the motivations of actors surveyed. Moreover, the interpretative paradigm is partly founded on Weber concept of 'Verstehen' which means that researcher has to understand subjective significations given by actors observed to explain their behaviours and motivations. Then researcher try to interpret the subjective significations that shape behaviour of actors surveyed. This position suits well with this research question and fits with ethnographic and observation methods [Lemieux 2000]. Due to our specific background<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Our personal background instant 10 years experience as journalist and business manager, in print media and hard news press..

and relationship with the field of journalism and news business, we have to avoid interpreting journalists' activities and subjective significations through our own experience and personal signification of journalism and media firm administration.

Anyway, despite those strong epistemological problems to solve, we state qualitative methodology, especially field observation and ethnography are appropriate to study this research question [Eckman and Lindlof 2003, Hollifield and Coffey 2006]. We hope to be more closed as possible of journalists' and journalists-managers, especially by implementing observation methods [Van Maanen 1988, 1998]. In fact, the first step of the current thesis is summarized in these two questions: who are journalists-managers and what do they do day after day? [Grey 1999, Laroche 2000] In a way one of the major steps to study the research question is to construct the basis of a new ideal-typical occupation of journalists-managers in the French hard news press, "drawing on a set of ethnographies to propose an empirically grounded model" [Barley 1996]. Basically we use the thick description [Geertz 1973], an ethnographic method that aims to describe and explain not only human behavior and motivations but its context as well as. We indeed try to work as close as possible to journalists-managers in order to describe their daily life and practices, attention focus, and build ethnography of action [Piette 1996] of newsroom people [Padioleau 1985].

One of the best appropriate methodologies is the participant observation [Jorgensen 1989]. Nevertheless we face a lot of refusal of newspapers' owners and managers: a lot of them refuse us to conduct this kind of research methodology inside their firms and newsrooms. Another practical difficulty to access to date and fieldwork depends on the nature of this field and particularly the culture of each news organization. Contrary to Whyte [1993] who quite needs to require the agreement of only one person to access to his fieldwork (the Italian American slum chief in Boston), here we adapt our introduction and first contact to each newspaper and need to find the key 'access person' [Tuchman 1973]<sup>11</sup>. Due to all those conditions and constraints and according to the research question, we have to build our own flexible methodology framework borrowing some elements from ethnography, (participant) observation and all other qualitative methods [Ericson, Baranek, and Chan 1989]. So we have to gather a lot of information and data about some newsrooms organizations, practices and by interviewing in a long-term run some journalists-managers who are agree to be our informer [Whyte 1993].

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<sup>11</sup> Quite all first interviews lead with some journalists working for different newspapers postulate a major variable which is prevailing within this field: the firm culture of each newspaper. If all newspapers' organization design and newsrooms' practices are similar in a global approach, a more accurate study shows that each French newspaper remains strongly define and shape by its own and specific culture widely dependant on its socio-history and in particular its founder, director or executives (CEO, newsroom executive or chief editor).

### 3. FIRST FINDINGS: STRONG PATTERNS AND ROUTINES THAT CONSTRAINT AN INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Our first findings concern the environment within the French hard news press is embodied. According to our research question and within the perspective of neo-institutionalism, we draw this environment by using primarily the methodology of socio-history [Noiriel 2006] and secondly our personal professional experience. We underscore the following prevailing structural variables and patterns that contribute to shape the field of the French hard news press and journalistic practices. They belong to three major categories: the political field, the determinants of the French journalistic profession, and the economic and business factors of this industry.

#### **3.1. The French Hard News Press and the Political Field: a Strong Interdependence**

The strong and historical relationships (personal and professional) are consubstantial of the French journalism and more extensively of the French media landscape [see in particular Neveu 2001, Chupin et Nollet 2006]. Even nowadays news provides us daily some stories that point out the very tight relationship between the political field and some of the most influential journalists and media workers. If the cases of weddings or cohabit couple between a mal politician and a female journalist (this is the typical case) or strong relationships between both fields exist for a long time in the history of French journalism, we notice a strengthening of this specific relationship since the election of Nicolas Sarkozy as President of the Republic. His cabinet at Elysee is composed by a lot of former journalists (in particular some of them who reported extensively on him before) and Nicolas Sarkozy go on to nurture the strong relationships he has built for two decades with the most influential reporters, media workers and media owners.

This specific situation illustrates the particular interdependence with the political field which characterized the journalism in France. We draw here the first leads of a typology of sub-fields of journalism craft from the prevailing variable: the degree of interrelations between those sub-fields and the political and economic fields in France. The degree of this interdependence varies with the nature and the role (in the production of journalism knowledge) of the journalistic sub-field [Neveu 2001, Marchetti 2002]: from the strongest (characterized by the political journalism<sup>12</sup> and

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<sup>12</sup> Lettieri et Saitta [2006], « L'identité journalistique à l'intersection des champs politique et intellectuel. Une comparaison France/Italie », in Chupin et Nollet [2006] ; Legrave [2005], « Les journalistes politiques : des

economic one<sup>13</sup>) to the weakest, including the following journalism sub-fields that rarely have strong impact on political or economic fields: social journalism<sup>14</sup>, education<sup>15</sup>, science... Through middle-range where the degree could vary according to the moment, the actors involved, and above all the issue political and/or economic matter. We include here the cultural journalism, the sports journalism, international journalism<sup>16</sup>, media journalism...

Following the majority of journalists who acknowledge this situation, some scholars (and few journalists who become involved in a 'reflexivity turn' to analyze their job and the production of news... after leaving the job) describe the relationship between the political (and economic) field with the most influential journalists as a "connivance", "collusion" [Charon 1991, 1994, du Roy 1992, Halimi 1997, Lemieux 2000, Lettieri et Saïtta 2006]. It's very common to acknowledge in the history and even nowadays that some hard news newspapers' owners, publisher or editor (and sometimes some of journalists) are also Parliament member, or communication trainer and officer for political organizations and individuals, or very familiar with political and economic elites (for instance they are member of the same intellectual societies or worldwide economic societies like the Bilderberg or Trilaterale conference).

Here we don't want to point out this "connivance" *per se* because this is the essence of the journalistic job to build strong relationships with organizations and individuals who could be a source of information and data. Nevertheless we want more deeply highlight that in order to mention that some of these activities are breaching the professional Charter of the French Journalists (« Charte des devoirs professionnels des journalistes français »)<sup>17</sup> and highlight that these interdependence is structurally rooted as a pattern in the hard news journalistic practices (and therefore an strong institutional logic), and its implication for the economics and the daily rules of this market and field. The socio-history of the hard news press is indeed plenty of cases of acquisitions, sells and but even daily (economic) life of newspapers are more governed by this kind of collusive relationships than economics rules where very different individuals and organizations are involved like political people (Ministers, members of Parliament, local representatives...), State and some of its employees, bankers, stakeholders and shareholders, etc.

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spécialistes du jeu politique », in Matonti (dir), *La démobilisation politique*, Paris, La Dispute ; Lemieux [2000], *Mauvaise presse. Une sociologie compréhensive du travail journalistique et de ses critiques*, Paris, Métailié

<sup>13</sup> Duval [2004], *Critique de la raison journalistique. Les transformations de la presse économique*, Paris, Le Seuil

<sup>14</sup> Levêque [2000], *Les journalistes sociaux. Histoire et sociologie d'une spécialité journalistique*, Rennes, P.U. de Rennes

<sup>15</sup> Padioleau [1976], « Système d'interaction et rhétorique journalistique », *Sociologie du travail*, 76 (3): 256-282

<sup>16</sup> Charpentier et Pierru [2006], « Un journalisme de « luxe ». Les logiques spécifiques de la production de « l'information internationale » au sein de la rédaction de TV5 », in Chupin et Nollet [2006].

<sup>17</sup> This is not however a compulsory law but just a moral agreement.

Consequently, in an economic perspective, the market of the French hard news press (national and local) is more mainly shaped by the rules of this interdependence than the economics rules. Even if this market is claimed as a free market, we have to acknowledge that this market is more an oligopolistic market because specific rules and norms are governing it than free economic rules (like free competition, market focus, etc.) Here we just mention one the last case that gives a clear picture of the whole configuration. The daily communist newspaper *L'Humanité* faces a financial and business crisis for a long time: it loses regularly readership and gain very few advertising. It faces a structural deficit (like many others French newspapers...). Consequently, in a regular free competition market, it has to be closed for a long time because its usual business model is not efficient. But in France the death of a daily hard news newspaper affects deeply the elites, in particular political, cultural and (some) economic ones. Even if they don't read anymore the newspaper or if they no more consider it as an influential news outlet. However the political elites consider that this newspaper has to still exist for the respect of diversity of philosophical and political opinions (*L'Humanité* is indeed the major representative of the communist opinions in the press): consequently political and economic elites, from a wide range of opinions (from the far-left-wing towards the right-wing and conservative ones), were agree to save *L'Humanité* from the death<sup>18</sup>. Thus a communist Minister<sup>19</sup> in 2001 plays the role of go-between with some big CEO and the newspaper, and put forward a rescue plan for the newspaper that implies to urge some major firms to become shareholder of the newspaper [Arboit 2002]. Even if this shareholding doesn't belong to their plan and it is based *only* on political justification than – of course in this case – on economic and financial goals (everyone knows this newspaper will continue to lose money and won't ever be able to give an economic and financial ROI to these shareholders...) Indeed *L'Humanité* was pleased to announce three new shareholders (that are besides regularly blamed in papers and stories released in the newspaper!): a banker (Les Caisses d'Epargne), Lagardère (a French conglomerate, formerly known as Matra, with holdings in publishing, retail, media, and aerospace), and TF1 (the first private French TV channel, whose major share-holder is Bouygues, an international leading real estate company)<sup>20</sup>.

Thus the hard news press, and especially political and economic journalism, is not only interdependent with the political and economic fields but also partly not autonomous from

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<sup>18</sup> In a personal interview in December 2007, a top manager of TF1 group confirmed to me (he required anonymity) that the CEO of TF1, Patrick Le Lay, was indeed urged (mainly) by various political leaders to become shareholder of the newspaper only in order to rescue it.

<sup>19</sup> The political membership doesn't matter here: the plan of the communist minister (Jean-Claude Gayssot) will be carry on by the successive... right-wing Minister of Culture and Communication, after the election of a new Government!

<sup>20</sup> Those 3 new shareholders control 20% of the newspaper capital.

those fields and their rules and institutions. Consequently the rules that govern these journalism subfields are not only defined and run by the journalism field but also by some of the most influential individuals and institutions belonging of politics, economics and the State system.

### 3.2. A Traditional Model of Journalism

A second prevailing structural variables and patterns that contribute to shape the field of the French hard news press and journalistic practices concerns the professional model of journalism craft and practices. Here we focus on the print hard news press which is the core interest of our work (the daily national newspapers) but we assume this model mainly coming from the print press still remains a basis of the whole journalism model in other news media<sup>21</sup>.

The socio-history and the current configuration of the print hard news journalism lead us to point out two major independent variables that hardly shape this field. First the model of the French journalism (which quite all journalists hope to reach and especially the young journalists) is the political one. Accessing to the newsroom political services' positions is considered as the establishment of a successful career. This type of journalism still remains the most legitimate one by the journalists in particular because this position means that the daily work lead the journalist to deals with the political individuals. In the mythology of journalism and according to the opinions of journalists, the political journalism is deemed of the most interesting and the most valuable [Le Bohec 2000, Charon 1993].

Second this traditional model is also shaped by the "literary logic". We mean there that the attention of print journalists is more oriented towards the own satisfaction in writing a story or a paper than towards the satisfaction of the readership (its demand or need of information and explanation of news): Charon [2007] call this situation a 'misunderstanding' (with a keen sense of modesty) but we personally state that this gap between journalists and readership is more than a misunderstanding: this is more a system built by journalists themselves (and newspapers' owners) in order to avoid giving some power to readership and allow their readers to be involved in their newspaper. Journalists are not indeed prone to be criticized by other people than their community<sup>22</sup>. We mean that if a print journalist would to

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<sup>21</sup> In the same covert interview (see above) with one of the top manager at TF1 Group, this person extensively acknowledged (and deplore it) that the journalists of TF1 newsroom, considered as ones of the most legitimate in French TV news, "still remain focused on their traditional professional rules, still think and work under the traditional rules and ways to produce news". He mention in particular that these journalists still remain focused on the ways of writing news and consider that journalists have to remain the sole judges of their own work.

<sup>22</sup> A relevant illustration of this situation is located in the very few papers or books by which journalists accept to have a retrospective and reflexive look on their work, on their practices in order to criticize themselves... This

estimate the quality of his work he is more likely prone to use community criteria than readership criteria (although the first and basic duty of journalist is to provide news and explanation to the Public and consequently to know at least if the Public is able to understand and appreciate the news delivered...) In the broad lines, it's more rewarding and legitimating (and less dangerous) for a journalist to be assessed by a peer than community outside institutions (like readers<sup>23</sup>).

Besides another variable is correlated to this one and reinforce this "literary logic": more and more journalists develop a second personal job besides the journalistic role, an occupation of writer. And they are very proud to be considered as a writer because it's a strong tool of social establishment<sup>24</sup>. Indeed we can notice an increasing number of books written by journalists, non-fiction books (which are generally the whole report they publish in a short version in their newspaper) and notably novels. This situation is rooted in the history of French journalism [Ruellan 1993, Delporte 1999, Neveu 2001] and particularly in its early stages (in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first part of 20<sup>th</sup> centuries) when major novels writers was also journalists and a lot of journalists considered journalism and literature as both faces of a same occupation.

### 3.3. Particular Economics of French Daily Hard News Press

A third structural pattern to be point out concerns the economics of the hard news press to such an extent this explains the robustness of its pattern. Here we only highlight the prevailing variables that could be split in two sides: the general variables that shape all the daily hard news organization and the work of their journalist, and the specific variables rooted in the socio-history development of the French journalism.

Like all other daily hard news press, the French one has to cope with structural constraints that are essential components of the nature of hard and breaking news. We can draw a short list of major ones. First, hard news and breaking news still remain (even if more and more management tools of information try to limit this by forecasting some news) non-predictable and an hazard. Consequently even if the content of a daily newspaper has been

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reluctance to "open the doors" of their work and their practices is shared by most of newspapers: we face personally this situation in our current fieldwork (do ethnographies and direct observations within the daily hard news press newsrooms).

<sup>23</sup> To give an illustration, we mention the general weak attention given by journalists to the letters send by readers to the editor or the journalist in the French print press. Our first observations about this situation (inside some French hard news press newsroom) confirm the findings of Wahl-Jorgensen [2007].

<sup>24</sup> Just to give a quick look, two directors of biggest dailies, Laurent Joffrin (*Libération*) and Eric Fottorino (*Le Monde*), although they have to be very busy by such occupation, they manage their second job as writer by publishing a lot of books (novels for Fottorino who was awarded in 2007 by a major book Prize, and political non-fictional books for Joffrin).



made up in the morning newsroom meeting, important breaking news could wreck this plan and modify a big part of the content... This news hazard is a first major constraint that doesn't allow building a steady business model like in the non-daily press which benefits more time and extensive dead-line to build the content of outlets and is not required to publish and explain the latest breaking news...

Second, the production system and the outlet forms established in this industry are very restricting and are not subject to be usually modified<sup>25</sup>. Consequently the product could not be redesigned or redefined as often as it could be necessary to fit carefully with the changing needs of the market (like in other consumer goods industry)... Moreover one can notice that journalism and news industry, like much other cultural industry, belongs to the supply-side economics (and not demand-side one). Thus major innovations within this kind of industry are coming from the press people and rarely from the customers and consequently we can infer innovations (in a wide marketing and economic perspective) on the product and the business model are less numerous than if customer and market needs were more inquired and used to fit better the newspapers with the readership expectations (like in magazine press).

Last – but not least – the daily press industry is based (until now) on the need (for the Public) and a daily organization. Until now (perhaps the rapid growing of online newspapers will urge major change on this variable) a hard news newspaper is required to produce a new issue each day (6 or 7 days a week). Since this variable one can state that daily press is a very particular industry for the marketing and business theory: producing a new product each day!

Other – particular – conditions of the French hard news press system are rooted in its history and particular features. This industry mainly works under the post-Second World War law and situation. The equilibrium created in 1944 and 1945 – more or less – still exists until now, even if it doesn't fit anymore with some sides of the journalism today and readership expectations. Here we only briefly describe the three major conditions. First the daily press system (the national one and more obviously the regional one) is built as a oligopolistic market where free competition doesn't exist. In particular in the regional press which is a legacy from the post-Second World War when the owners of the largest dailies in each regional area set a (non-written) gentlemen-agreement based on non-competition. According to this a big newspaper and press group has a *de facto* monopoly in each area, and it's quite forbidden to create a competitive situation in the area of a peer neighbor!

Secondly the central State plays a major role in the daily and opinion press (which is

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<sup>25</sup> Perhaps the last example (not only for the French print press) of a complete modification of the forms outlet (length of stories, pages' design and editing, columns...) occurred for an international major event: the 9/11 attack on Twin Towers and on others buildings in the USA.

another major limit to a free competition market) by allocating subsidies to the newspapers that benefit very few advertising revenues because of their content (that expresses political and philosophical opinions that are not likely to attract advertisers...) or their low revenues and incomes (from advertising and readership). Besides another wide range of subsidies are allocating to this press, especially in order to reduce the high cost of the delivery and circulation system<sup>26</sup>. Moreover we state that, to some extent, the French central State and its Civil Services help generously the newspapers by tolerating the numerous law violations. We mentioned above that newspapers' industry doesn't provide good conditions for a free competition. Another violation has to be mentioned: the Labor Law is regularly unobserved by the regional daily newspapers. For instance they hire some citizens who locally gather information for the newspaper (les "Correspondants locaux de Presse") but without a well-defined law status... But everyone can easily imagine that no politician would denounce those situations notably because they need the daily press (in particular the regional one which is very powerful concerning the Parliament and local elections) to build and sustain their career.

A third case has to be noticed: the socio-history of the French journalism points out that journalists and newspapers' owner give a little and poor attention to the economic side of the newspaper. They are more interested by the content (in particular the political slant and the economic approach of the society) and relationships with the (political, cultural, intellectual) elites than the business model and the economic conditions of sustaining the newspaper...

Our neo-institutional approach (that requires among others to point out convergent and divergent process within an economic field), combined with a socio-history slant and our first observations drawn from the current fieldwork, highlight that all the prevailing variables are convergent in a major and constraining process: the hard news press industry is reluctant to be integrated in a free competition market. However we can point out the existence of some individuals and organizations within this field which attention is more focused on market conditions, more receptive to managerialization process, and therefore could be actors of a managerial and business change [Kleiner 2003].

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<sup>26</sup> For a clear description of this complex system of subsidies, see Mathien [2003], *Economie générale des médias*, Paris, Ellipses.

## 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### 4.1. The Journalist-Manager, driver of Managerialisation Process

The choice of journalist-manager role as a tool to underscore and inquire institutional change is justified by two major reasons: it invites to focus study and fieldwork on individual actors (we postulate that change process is lead by individuals) and they hold an occupation that is central in the newspaper organization and workflow.

Since this role of journalist-manager in France is not investigated yet, we first have to set the basis of its typology (describing who they are, what is their daily occupation, etc.). The sole notion built by academics in France is the « *journaliste cadre* »<sup>27</sup> [Devillard et al.2001] and cover that “journalist-manager”. Since it's based on steady and formal variables that don't enable to build a dynamic approach to this occupation. Indeed we prefer focus on dynamic variables to characterize those journalist-managers: besides their personal data, their daily practices (editorial and management ones), daily numerous decision-making process in which they are involved, and interactions with other people within and outside the newsroom.

First findings on this occupation underscore a wide typology that could need to be clarified: we include occupation from the top newsroom management (editor, newsroom director and chief editor) to middle management (including newsroom unit chief, and their deputies). Of course the implication of those people in organizational change management differs according from a newspaper to another and its organizational and professional culture. By means of ethnography and direct observations we are able to describe as most accurate as possible those daily activities and interactions of journalist-manager. We assume indeed that if some owners and shareholders aim to initiate a deep change in the organization of their newspaper and even in the (within the perspective to fit it better with some upper financial and business goals) they “use” journalist-manager as mediator and instigator of new professional and managerial practices and goals. Thus they pay more attention in recruiting those people who need to hold both strong and outstanding skills: a good journalist (to be legitimate to manage newsroom and journalists staff) and be convinced that are needed managerial change and greater attention to be paid to newspaper economics and business model. Here we cover major findings in general management and about the empirical role of manager [Laroche 1995, 2000].

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<sup>27</sup> In a way we could translate « *cadre* » by officer or manager but it could be biased. In fact the substantive “cadre” designs an employee who is graduate or who hold an upper occupation (in the firm hierarchy) that differentiate him from supervisor or (factory) worker.

Secondly, in the same way, by means of spending several weeks within newsrooms, it's easier and more heuristic to feel the organizational culture of each newsroom and describe it through those daily activities and journalist-managers characters and interactions. This notion of journalist-manager and above all its implementation could be discussed: we have to avoid focusing only on those journalist-manager in order to characterize the managerialisation process since other individuals are involved within and must be also inquired (CEO, shareholders, consultants...) Those features nurture our extensive approach of business model described above.

## **4.2. Implications for Theory and Practice in Media Studies**

Besides the contribution we aim to provide for the neo-institutional theory and management studies, we hope this study contribute to media studies and especially media economics and management. Firstly we hope to be able to shape extensively the extensive approach of business model concept that suits better to highlight the fundamentals of hard news press economics and business. Furthermore we forecast this extensive business model could be useful in societies and newspapers' industries closed to the French one (in particular those include a strong central State and are highly interdependent with the political field).

Another contribution would take place in describing and explaining the process of managerialisation within hard news press. Here we are in the steps of numerous scholars who inquire this kind of process for two decades by picturing how "MBA's rule the newsroom" [following Underwood 1993]. Thus our current study has to provide a special point of view with the French case, update some of the findings, and provide new findings: those new ones could pertain to the process of managerialisation that combine professional (journalistic) logics and managerial (economics and management) ones. Within this perspective a major interest is to know if and how journalistic practices could be infused by management slant and 'philosophy' and therefore modify professional practices (for instance by focusing more attention to market claims and needs or to owners' desiderata)...

Other interest is to open and penetrate the "black box". Indeed newsrooms of major French newspapers are not widely open to external observers who inquire sensitive issues (like the newsroom and its practices, its power struggle, its accurate interactions, economics and financial situation, management policies, etc.) [Padioleau 1985, Lemieux 2000].

Moreover this study – which is located at boundary between theory of organization, management studies, and media studies – could provide some findings on this issue: what are the differences between a 'classical' firm and a newspaper firm? Is the current situation

lead to notice that newspaper management and economics theory get closer than general firms? That could be nurture the theory of newspaper firm.

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