Covering the internet: an acculturation strategy for press of record?

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Contents

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This is part of a wider doctoral study focusing on the acculturation of the French paper of record *Le Monde* to the Internet and the technical devices it allows. The article attempts to present the main trails that lead us to believe that the ongoing state of crisis in which the press finds itself today (and has been regularly for a while), although feeding a constant worry and raising questions of survival and democracy mechanisms, also sees the formation of small areas in which experiences are run, while the symbolically and economically heavy companies continue to function as normally (thus according to norms) as can. These "areas", for which we attempt here to describe the localization according to the coverage that newspapers provide regarding their relation to innovation, could accordingly be considered as liminal, and as such be a place for mediation between two cultures, acculturation between the "old" traditional newspaper industry's culture, and that of the internet. These suggestions are built upon various interviews led inside *Le Monde* with different hierarchy practitioners as well as through the analysis of diverse corpuses put together with articles covering innovation, and in particular mentioning "crisis" and "blogs".

1 Introduction

This research is part of a wider doctoral study that focuses on the acculturation of the French paper of record *Le Monde* to the Internet via the technical devices it allows.

The discourse produced about new technologies throughout the past twenty years is invoked in this study as an indicator of the changes occurred in the way technology has been considered.

How has the discourse in relation to the internet evolved in newspapers over the past thirty years? What used to be subject to innovation related enthusiasm, has over the past decade turned not only into a resort in trying to "save" journalism and what constitutes it (over the past few years many have spoken of paper's "death"), it has also, and evidently, become a major challenge that can be witnessed via the reorganization of news rooms as well as the redefining of what journalism itself is.

Thus, we aim here to show and develop what two positions the press seems to be juggling with the Internet. On one hand, the Internet is a terrain that presents itself

as one of most importance strategically to the newspaper, in the thrive for survival and reconstruction, in readjusting itself to the present social context (as we believe it to be a constant dispute faced by journalism). On the other hand, although papers have shown a large investment towards the internet, we aim to show that their strategy is mostly that of observing a pretty conservative position, but in which the inconsistency of part of the coverage may be signaling the presence of some "tactical areas". Discourse instability is here illustrated with coverage concerning the "press crisis", as well as blogs.

We feed upon a series of interviews with different levels of hierarchy practitioners inside French paper *Le Monde*, as well as a corpus of its articles relating to innovation and more particularly the crisis in journalism and blogs. We will attempt to understand with more depth what a challenge it can be for newspapers to communicate on "innovation", not only in a aim to inform and guide citizens through novelty, but equally in the case of Internet, to inform and guide themselves as "practitioners of news" through the realms of a media they aren't yet acculturated to.

Our main focus on press of record is guided by the idea that those newspapers have more to lose in the ongoing acculturation process than smaller sized press companies and younger firms, not just economically but also symbolically by means of the image they give out. They are usually considered a reference in their proximity with representations of a "mythical" journalism, revealed through stability over the years, usually over a long period of time.

2 Elements of context

2.1   Newspapers & the internet

Over the past thirty years, the Internet has turned from being an object of interest for technophiles and computer engineers to an everyday tool used in households across the dominant countries of the world[1]. Specialized press was the first to focus on the internet, in the early eighties, and as we situate this research in a French context, it is interesting to mention that many French computing magazines, when talking about networks, often referred to American findings, evolutions, practices. As soon as computers, followed by the Internet, started entering households, and thus allowing private use, generalist newspapers began to cover the phenomenon. Columns focused on media had already emerged in French newspapers in the seventies. The left wing paper *Libération* was the first to include such a column in the seventies, thus encouraging reflection and discussion on the status of media

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[1] A study published by the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) in June 2008 stated that the ten countries with the highest rates of households connected to high-speed internet are Denmark with 36,7%, the Netherlands 35,5 %, Norway 33,4 %, Switzerland 32,7%, Island 32,3 %, Sweden 32,2 %, South Korea 31,2%, Finland 30,7%, Luxembourg 28,3%, and Canada with 27,9%. France comes in thirteenth position with 26,4 %, and the United States follow after Germany with 25%.

amidst a highly competitive media context, as well as the political context (with which the links with media have always be subject to debate). However, the Internet was not automatically covered in the "media" column. It went from being a subject of curiosity as a "new technology", to consideration in relation to economic issues (many rapidly growing start-ups taking advantage of the internet), or as a measured initiator of social changes involving communicating, leisure, etc. Since the mid nineties, media coverage has taken a new interest in the internet in that investing in online formats was becoming a challenge. The press industry, apparently stuck in an ingoing crisis since the seventies, started investing in the internet in search for solutions to the many reasons given for the crisis: drop in readership, lack of trust towards papers, ageing media, new emerging competition…

Thus, the internet has evolved from being a subject of curiosity in press coverage, to that of a challenge for press companies that tend to see savior in the new media although adapting hasn't been as obvious as it may have been thought in the beginning. Different periods of adjustment to the internet can clearly be defined when analyzing newspapers' venture on the internet: the 1995 version of *Le Monde* on the internet has nothing to do with the declension one can read online nowadays.

2.2   A paper of record: *Le Monde*

We take interest in newspapers of record rather than press in general although the internet has become the major investment for both more traditional, and more popular papers. What is nowadays considered "press of record" is also called "quality papers", "broadsheet papers", or *presse de référence* in French, meaning literally "press of reference". Usually renown on an international scale, the status of such papers is considered to be of higher standards than that of the rest of the press. Although various studies have been undertaken in defining the characteristics of such a press (Merril, J.C. 2000; Rieffel, R. 1984), what constitutes such a status isn't so much of our interest as we believe it to be extremely variable (cultural and political contexts being relevant), as the traditional representations it tends to reflect. Indeed, throughout the changes of society, newspapers of record tend to keep the same serious tone, expressed by editorial choices illustrated by the subjects that are covered, as well as the style of writing. Newspapers of record recognize and confirm one another's existence by referring to their international fellows. An explicit example is that of French *Le Monde*'s Saturday's edition that includes a four-page excerpt selection of articles from *The New York Times*. In France it is commonly acknowledged that *Le Monde*'s writing is that of high standards, making it hard to read in it's entirety for an average person. Another criteria reinforcing the idea of tradition is illustrated by the importance of rites and rituals (*Le Monde*'s morning editorial meeting takes place standing solemnly in the director's office) feeding the internal organization that

tends to privilege long-term jobs for journalists that may grow to benefit from high-standard statuses as well[2].

Because of the traditional aspect of newspapers of record, we believe that the contrast that may be encountered with internet's so-called "modernity", can be of interest in analyzing the process of adaptation of newspapers to the internet. In a wider doctoral study, we aim to analyze the process via the inclusion in online papers of various technical devices allowed by the internet, such as blogs.

This article focuses on the French paper *Le Monde*. A few of it's characteristics have already been mentioned above, but it also appears significant to explicit the company's particular internal organization. *Le Monde* was created in 1945 in the premises of *Le Temps* newspaper that had been closed down for suspicious affairs during the Second World War. The General De Gaulle strongly encouraged the creation of an independent press organ that was to become *Le Monde*, with legendary Hubert Beuve-Méry at the head. The later contributed to many of the rituals that still exist inside the company, and stated that his newspaper was to become *un journal de reference*. Although it is commonly acknowledged in opposition to an Anglo-Saxon model that there be a French journalistic model that apparently doesn't separate facts and opinion (this could be subject to much debate), *Le Monde* belongs to France's most neutral considered newspapers, and as said above, it's foundations were that of will for independence and freedom of speech[3].

Le Monde has experienced various phases during it's existence, due to internal and external politics. But it still stands, and that is what contributes to calling it *de reference* says deputy manager Laurent Greilsamer.

In 1994, a new period opened up for the French paper as a new department was created to do with telematics and electronic services (T.E.S.). It gave birth to "Luce" in 1995, *Le Monde*'s first online baby, publishing the daily editorials written by Jean-Marie Colombani, director back then. The online paper evolved towards a daily ".pdf" version produced by the T.E.S. who were also working on the creation of various CR-ROMS, and programms. The T.E.S. became the *Sequence Multimedia* in 1996, and moved from the printing buildings where it was born to *Le Monde*'s recent new location (*Rue Claude Bernard*). The "electronic workers" moved again in 1999, and the department was turned into a subsidiary company called *Le Monde Interactif*. From then on, responsibilities evolved inside *Le Monde Interactif* that was growing to not only concentrate on the online newspaper and creating electronic devices anymore, as it also started working on the advertising to go with it. By 2004, *Le Monde.fr*, the online version of *Le*

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[2] In the French papers *Le Monde* and *Liberation*, long-term journalists that have experienced various periods in the evolution of the newspaper, or in political contexts are called "rubricards". It means "columnists", but privileged by high-standard representations, such as very well informed and aware journalists specialised on a topic.

[3] We do not naively adhere to Le Monde's total neutrality, as we cannot admit to fully objectivity from any existing newspaper.

Monde, wasn't only publishing the articles appearing in the daily afternoon paper anymore, a separate newsroom was also attempting to produce exclusive papers for the internet site, and technical devices such as forums, chats, and blogs, were introduced allowing registered readers to react.

The internet site's growing popularity became an issue in 2006, as it started making more benefit than its senior *Le Monde*, and the money was not being dispatched. This drew attention to the fact that *Le Monde* and *Le Monde.fr* were both evolving and growing in different newsrooms, tinted with different business cultures.

Evidently, newspapers and media in general regularly cover the happenings and evolutions of the internet, and have done so throughout various periods as we stated above. But is this coverage the only result of journalism's admitted social role inducing it to provide citizens with news? Or could this coverage also be helping so-called "dying" newspapers by leading them through the realms of an unknown and rapidly changing context provided by the internet?

3 Much talk about the internet

Growing with the paper's investment online, was the realization that the internet wouldn't turn out to be a plain new media for already formatted news, but that the classic frames integrated by newspapers would additionally need to evolve according to the new media, and it would grow to become a major challenge in the "survival" of newspapers.

3.1   Mind the gap made by technicism

Although the talk has evolved according to admitted different "internet periods"[4], one characteristic has persisted throughout time: the technicist[5] dimension of the discourse. What we call "technicist" refers to the ideal widely conveyed nowadays, whether in scientific, media or public spheres, according to which a technology such as the internet may be central, and even, the major cause for social changes. Technicist discourses illustrate ideal yet simplified understandings of how a technology surfaces in society, and the uses that are attributed to it.

As Bernard Miège (1996, 1997, 2007) has shown throughout many of his works[6], the emergence of a technology in society is far more complex than a simple give and receive model. Media do not emerge naturally. As such, technologies are clearly thought up, designed and created according to imagined needs and desires

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[4] Such as "Web 1.0" and "Web 2.0". We therefore argue the idea of such clean cut separable periods in social practices of the internet can't be as easily made.

[5] We borrow "technicist" from the French *techniciste*, a contraction of "techno-determinism".

[6] Bernard Miège, *La société conquise par la communication*, volumes I, II and II, attempt to describe the complex evolution process of communication in society.

in society. Nevertheless, the use that is made of a technology when introduced to the public sphere is not always what had been imagined for it[7]. This is a first indicator of the intricacy that is encountered when "launching" a new technology. A second illustration of technicism a propos the internet, our present context of interest, concerns notions such as "participation" and "interactivity".

Over the past seven years, "participation" has become a key idea in the understanding and promotion of the Internet. It is often suggested that the sole "internet surfer" status suffices in bringing "participation" into action. Participation is encouraged by a certain number of technical communicational devices[8] allowing the surfers to "publish" thoughts, reactions, and such. It is related to the ideal of participatory democracy, in which everybody would have a say upon everyday political, economic, social dimensions of life.

"Interactivity" is another popular notion conveyed a propos the internet. The internet is often qualified as "interactive", as are web sites. The gap with reality may seem that of a detail, yet human presence is required for "interactivity" to indeed be effective.

And once that human presence is acknowledged as necessary in giving any meaning at all to the Internet, a step back can be taken regarding the science fictional world Internet is often portrayed as. The ambient techno-determinism to which the internet is majoritarily subject to doesn't coincide with the "Web 2.0" boom, that suggests a breach in the evolution of the internet and what it may offer to the "surfers", rather than changes in society itself into which the new technology in question is anchoring[9] itself. Back when the internet, or rather, "networks" and "telematics" were the only preoccupation of computer engineers, students, scholars and technophiles, a "global village" ideal was already associated to the new technology

Aspiring to most coherent and neutral results, research in our field[10] encourages to take a step back from the ambient techno-determinism in order to analyze the evolution process with less possible bias from such ideals that aren't always based

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[7] An example of difference between the use imagined for a technology, and the use put to practice when commercialised is the phone. Indeed, when it was first integrated in households, people hadn't imagined it to communicate with peers, but rather to listen to plays. Notably, people were showed much suspicion towards the telephone, considering it as a spying instrument. In *L'invention du quotidien*, a French historian and sociologist Michel De Certeau celebrates the reappropriation of everyday objects, tools and media, thus contradicting mass media worries strongly developed by the School of Frankfurt.

[8] This is the translation of what we refer to in French as *dispositif technique de communication*. This expression stresses the idea that for example a chat room, or a forum, are tools that request human intervention to acquire meaning.

[9] In his latest published volume, Bernard Miège argues that the use of "anchorage" rather than "emergence" may better correspond to the process of "integration" of a new technology into society: slow and steady.

[10] Communication Studies, called "Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication" in France.

on social reality. Yet it would be equally as biased to ignore such discourses that summon so much importance and interest in the public sphere via media, political and social debating. Thus, we aspire to include these discourses in our research, not necessarily subscribing to the conveyed ideas, but rather questioning their importance and their role in the mutation process that newspapers are undergoing in reference to the grown popularity of the Internet.

3.2   How the gap matters

Therefore, one must be aware of what can be considered technicist or not. Two main ideals prevail over the others that are frequently linked. Two dichotomized appreciations equally bought up during the emergence of "new" media in the past. Although newspapers may have been considered fabulous tools for democracy by means of news coverage, they were of grand aspiration for propaganda during the first and second world wars, giving birth to fear of manipulation and control.

In media, and to our interest in newspapers, the Internet has been associated to both dichotomized representations. As specified above, mainly specialized press spoke of the networks and telematics[11] in the eighties. Although the talk was very technical, mainly aiming to describe various devices, advertisements, article titles, and editorials often contributed to the construction of the democratic ideal of the internet, that would one day connect the population all around the world allowing a global freedom of speech. French generalist newspapers started to invoke the internet in the early nineties (around 1994), a little before they started to invest in the new technology. Although the articles weren't as strongly impregnated with such hope, less technological excitement coming from them than from first hour technophiles, a certain admiration still leaked from their talk. Admiration and enthusiasm were both involved in the coverage back then, but in parallel as newspapers' popularity continued to drop, the internet's investment potential progressively grew more interesting. The different steps newspapers took online illustrate this evolution. *Le Monde,* for example, began with publishing only the daily editorials, and continued with daily uploads of the newspaper's articles in ".pdf" format. Nowadays, *Le Monde.fr*'s popularity has grown so much that the next confrontation involves motivating the paper's columnists in engaging on the Internet site, providing expertise and a step back to a fast working internet team[12]. In spite of such an example in the evolution of consideration taken on by newspapers about the internet, it is important to remind that a favorable social context is also necessary for such changes.

The continuous drop in newspaper sales, and the numerous amount of issues raised with the Internet (concerning professional journalistic identity versus "citizen

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[11] We engaged in an overviewing analyze of the way the internet was mentionned in a selection of five French computing magazines in the early eighties : *Sciences et Vie Micro, Soft & Micro, L'oridnateur individuel, L'information US en direct, Informatiques magazines.*

[12] This was observed and confirmed via interviews inside *Le Monde*'s offices in October 2008 as a "Desk Numérique" ("digital desk") had just been opened inside the walls with people originating from *Le Monde Interactif*'s headquarters.

reporting" for example) in spite of the measured success and hope it seems to provide to news companies have today given way to coverage that cannot ignore the worries that are also procured by the "new media". Nowadays, most news company managers tend to concord in considering the internet as the major challenge in the survival of their business. However, the challenge becoming more obvious and important by the day evidently raises worries as well in adapting to a media long tinged with its own representations that aren't necessarily in accordance with that of traditional journalism and the identity it constructed over the years and centuries even.

Thus, we build from the observation according to which coverage of the internet produced by newspapers, and in particular, *Le Monde*, is easily variant, switching from the raise of hope to invoking worries provoked by despair facing the Internet. As a result, these articles contribute to an ambient blur regarding the status of the Internet in respect to newspapers, as well as the concrete reasons for the industry's state of crisis. On one hand, this coverage is clearly representative of an unstable situation in which the newspaper industry is facing the Internet. On the other hand, we aim to question these discourses and the underlying meaning that may rise from them regarding the newspaper industry, and it's evolution process involving the Internet.

4 Two topics: crisis and blogs

We will call upon two topics of varied status and importance to the newspaper industry, in order to extend the idea according to which the unevenness of the coverage about the internet is not only representative of the milieu's hesitation proven towards the present situation and the evolution of the internet, but may also be a way to hang on, and progressively acculturate. Firstly, we will question the state of "crisis" in which the journalism field is considered to be. What kind of crisis is it or are they? What may the causes be? Can any solutions be found? Secondly, we will take interest in an ambiguous topic for the journalistic grounds: that of blogs.

4.1   Journalism's crises

Over the past thirty years the journalistic milieu has been diagnosed with "crisis". Political proximity, corruption, an ageing readership, economic concentration, are various ills journalism has been accused of, and are a few of the potential reasons raised by the field when in search of motives for such drops in sales, advertising, in popularity. Yet thirty years ago, society wasn't the same as it is today. And it wouldn't be all that adventurous to furthermore indicate that society was certainly not the same as today back during both world wars, neither at the time of the French Revolution. However, all these very different periods were that of instability, "crisis" as often pointed out, for journalism and it's democratic aspirations. So it would be justifiable to suggest crises are regular in the journalist

field, and seeing the various issues of such times that can be summoned at the various periods, they may well even be measured as constitutive of what journalism is, or at least considered to be.

So what about the ongoing crisis? As previously mentioned, a state of crisis started to be raised in France[13] in the mid seventies, and it doesn't seem to have known any retirement since. Although a few of the concerned practitioners and managers summoned hope in 1996, as sales rised for the first time in years, 1997 confirmed that the precedent year was nothing but a short breach on a seemingly never-ending slope.

If we quote critical texts about journalism written in the seventies, accusations mainly go towards proximity and corruption involving politics. The eighties and nineties were the scene of generational ageing, but the turn of the century seems to have added the challenge of the "freedom" that the internet is thought to provide to the formerly encountered and non resolved issues. As we said before, the internet is strongly impregnated with techno-deterministic representations, notably that of freedom exercised through the participatory practices allowed online. Newspapers are no more the main providers on a unique media, they face a large competition online in a capitalistic flow made of companies, start-ups as well as individuals. But it is not our goal here to explain what caused and is still causing the state of crisis in which journalism find itself, but rather to question what the newspapers say about it.

Firstly, it seems normal that newspapers would cover important information of their concern, since newspapers' role is meant to be that of democracy, and endangered newspapers can logically signify an endangered democracy. This argument is frequently raised either in debates (in various conditions, public debates, media covered or not, by television, radio, newspapers and/or the internet) or in articles covering different dimensions of the sector. Not only will we consider this argument as legitimate seeing the main role of journalism in society, it can also be analyzed as a self-legitimating call, a reminder to the readers of what would be lost: not just money in bankruptcy, but above all, the surveillance of democracy.

Furthermore, we suggest that the numerous causes mentioned by newspapers for the drop they have been experiencing create a blur, making it very difficult for readership to measure the scale of importance with which the various causes could be considered. Indeed, different articles in one same newspaper, and different practitioners in various interviews point out diverse causes and reasons for the crisis, making only one thing certain: the existence of a crisis[14]. The variability testifies of incapacity in the journalistic milieu to structure the unstable situation in

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[13] We base this on the analysis of articles and publications mentioning the expression *crise du journalisme*. The corpus was framed with help of library catalogues as well as the "Factiva" periodical database.

[14] Yet in an interview directed in October 2008, Alain Frachon, editor in chief of *Le Monde*, argued the state of crisis in which newspapers are, and said he would rather call it a time of evolution on an "unsettled ground" ("*une evolution d'un paysage très mouvant*").

which the field is, equally confirming the difficulties in solving the problem(s). If we take into account the basic definition of the word "crisis", it indeed defines a state of instability at it's peak, creating a moment of uncertainty regarding the future[15]. Only one element of the definition poses a slight dilemma: that of the length of time of a crisis, habitually short (in proportion to it's intensity), hence creating a space of evolution in which roles and practices are reversed and exchanged, and from which economic survival would not seem viable.

On the other hand, much talk about crisis doesn't necessarily certify it's intensity at all times neither its existence. It may also be contributing to rendering such fragility banal. In fact, when analyzing a corpus constituted of articles today concerning the press crisis (*la crise de la presse*) published in *Le Monde* between 1994 and, many recent articles mention the crisis as contextual when covering other subjects such as the publication of a book, a television series about wine, a photography festival[16]… Referring to a state of crisis in such a banal way could be contributing to the settling of an idea according to which newspapers are in a delicate position, thus clearing requirement for immediate solutions to which concerned citizens could be in demand. The constant allusion to such frailty can thus be contributing to excusing the continuous movement, the fickleness of the milieu, as well as the slip-ups sometimes pointed to that also disserve journalism, leaving some room for experimenting, one of the implications of such a liminal moment as a crisis.

4.2   Blogs' popularity

Additional hypotheses can be developed when taking interest in discourse produced concerning blogs.

Blogs, earlier called "Weblogs", consist in an easily editable internet page for users with varied competences, put to disposal by a blog plateform. The user can publish any data he wants (according to variable moral conditions regimented by the charts when signing up), and it most frequently appears in an ante-chronological order, although it can also appear chronologically. Not having much to do with newspapers, if not that the blog "owner" provides a certain form of news with altering regularities, blogs gained visibly totally independently from newspapers. In the mid-nineties, Matt Drudge revealed the Monica Lewinsky Scandal in his blog called "The drudge report", raising awareness in parallel, on the existence and potentials of such "internet diaries". Blogs existed beforehand, but were mainly technology focused and had thus been the interest of technophiles especially.

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[15] "Crisis" comes from the Latin *crisis* and the Greek *krisis* that means "decision". Medicine, Economics, Politics, Social and abstract definitions collide in defining a more or less rapid moment of passage during which the evolution of things is at it's gravest (*Le Grand Robert*, 2005)

[16] This does not signify that it appears only as a context in articles as such, as coverage having for main subject the crisis is not rare either.

With grown visibility and new possibilities bought up, blogs started sprouting faster than before on the internet in the mid-nineties and at the turn of 2000, and "bloggers" identities were therefore diversifying as well. Random citizens, politicians, various experts, and Ex or still in practice journalists started investing in a "personal" blog in which they could write nearly whatever they wanted that may have not been allowed otherwise, for practical, material, ethical and so on reasons. The time came in 2004 for blogging in newspapers. Blogs that had gained the circle of the more than potential rivalry faced by generalist news providing "papers" on the internet, were carefully included in the online package progressively put to disposal.

In October 2004, *Le Monde.fr* opened a blog platform to the use of subscribers, as well as their own paper columnists. One of *Le Monde*'s political news correspondent's based in New York and Washington, Corine Lesnes, was actually one of the first to blog on *Le Monde.fr*. Although accessible to all internet surfers on the newspaper's blog platform, editorial decisions were taken in putting the blogs in evidence. Much evolution has been seen since, involving the links towards blogs appearing on the home page, placed further down the page, then further up, on the right hand side, then towards the center etc. Nonetheless, there persists a categorization based on whether the blogger is "invited" to blog (meaning he doesn't have to have a subscription to the online paper) which includes professional journalists from inside *Le Monde*, and outside, as well as experts and writers, or whether the "blogger" happens to have a subscription. Moreover, a classification is made amongst the subscribers' blogs, highlighting twenty to thirty of them amongst hundreds by listing them nearby the "invited blogs" on the blog platform's homepage.

Again, we want to focus on the evolution of the newspaper's discourse on blogs. A corpus of articles from Le Monde between 2004 and nowadays framed with the key word "blogs" gave a very long list of articles. However, it is interesting to include them all in order to compare the contexts of appearance of such a word. The analysis of such firstly confirms the rise of coverage concerning blogs. The different subjects referred to in the articles are blogging as such, and sometimes more particularly participation, politics in various forms are also popular, and some coverage also concerns way of life, or cuisine, and at times consists in the sole mention of a protagonist's blog a the end of the article.

The study confirms that coverage citing blogs has evolved in accordance to their popularity, but this doesn't mean that they are causally related. Indeed, as said previously, the mention of the word blog is sometimes simply the author's blog address or that of the person portrayed in the article. Although this shows how the use of the word blog has acquired a certain banality, and has become a simple contextual detail in some occasions, it nevertheless does not mean that *Le Monde* has fully adopted the ".*fr*'s" practices relating to blogs. Just as with the word "crisis", *Le Monde*'s "speech" concerning blogs is still inconstant, and although its journalists will be accusing blogs of pretension and futility in a auto-legitimating article concerning their profession on one day (*Les blogs, infos ou influence,Le Monde,*06/03/2009), on the next they just well may be praising such editorial tools for the democratic values in Cairo (*Les rebelles de la toile, Le Monde*, 12 mars

2009) . Of course different journalists are the authors of the articles, therefore possibly expressing their own opinions. But moreover, these changes in coverage signal the editorial inconsistency of a newspaper that is on the contrary meant to take on only one identity[17] (Ringoot R., 2004) that is expressed through editorial choices, and the form these take in the newspaper.

Although the instability of speech regarding blogs may show how the newspaper is yet to be restful concerning its progress on the internet, it may also be significant of the explicit split in *Le Monde*, between the company that produces the paper, and the one that focuses on the internet. As one's main objective is to grow with the internet when taking advantage of the possibilities and tools provided by the media, the other still thrives daily in the production of a paper symbolizing its cogwheel position in democracy, gradually constituted over the years and through challenges. Such a split is very clearly visible when spending even little time in the newspaper's premises. Many columnists will still hardly acknowledge the existence of the online version, and the fast workers inside the *Desk Numérique* thrive hard to get the wheels between both editions into action.

But the variability of discourse concerning blogs, just as for crisis, can also be considered as trivial in the understanding of slow yet progressive adaptation of the "old" media to the "new". Although grand strategies are expected from such economically important companies in such phases of very challenging change when much could be to loose, these ones seem mostly to stay closed, adapting only little by little. Such a conservative position may be justified by many arguments, such as the fear of loss, long-term history, strong symbolism etc. Yet the variations in "blog coverage" and crises as raised in this article illustrate small locations in which inconstancy can be identified. These areas are not necessarily regarded as central points in the newspaper's endurance, but they may be just that. They seem to define liminal areas that hold the passing time of evolution for the newspaper, and in which experiments can be made. As such, liminal moments in anthropology are demonstrated by ritual moments of passage, such as the rite of passage from childhood to manhood[18]. We therefore suggest that the discordance seemingly existing between the "old" and the "new" media may create a profitable area allowing at least small benefits of doubt that could be considered as tactics in the strongly challenging spot opened by the internet. Accordingly, newspapers' stubbornness in conserving practices rather than changing in revolutionary manners

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[17] Roselyne Ringoot's research may be significant for foreign scholars when apprehending French press, as it specifies the issues and characteristics of such an identity, and may give tools in understanding the French model that isn't necessarily based on the acquaintance of facts and opinions.

[18] We borrow the idea of liminality from Victor W. Turner's *The ritual Process, Structure and anti-structure*. In the same way as he considers the "ritual as a social mechanism for approaching real social problems [he] shows how analysis of the ritual process provides insight into the structure and transformation of groups and societies […]".

not only illustrates the economic and symbolic weights in such businesses, but also designates a strategic position in which evolution happens in due time.

5 Conclusion

This paper raises various dualities, inside the newspaper *Le Monde* between its "paper" and "online" offices, in techno-determined discourses whether hope or fear focused, via opinion variability in the newspaper's coverage of the ingoing journalism "crisis" and in the mention of blogs, and through it's linking of strategy and tactics.

But the overarching idea of this work, and that of the wider doctoral study, is to consider the space in between such dualities (many more could be cited in consideration of newspapers' relation to the internet). Space and time seem practically suspended in such small liminal areas providing a restricted location of something maybe willing to get as close as can be to "freedom" in which more or less decisive experiments and trials can be made. It is the state of "crisis" that allows a "space" for that kind of hesitation inside the mechanisms of such a heavy company that cannot stop and wait for a miracle solution as it would have a serious economic impact, as it would create a breach in the democratic ambitions it pursues. A wider proposition in the doctoral study concerns the potential for acculturation to the internet that these liminal areas provide, thus avoiding as much as possible the contradictions and paradoxes that could logically rise from the encounter of two such instances endowed with such different cultures.

This study's intention is far from trying to solve any problem or question regarding the future or death of newspapers as we consider that in spite of the rapidly changing state in which the field finds itself, better understanding the process of mutation may allow to better apprehend the different "components" of such a phenomenon, and help in developing questions that cannot solely be limited to the death or survival of such a sector, but to which the answer may turn out to be more relevant.

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