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Olivier Pilmis

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[VARIA]

Producing in Urgent Situations
The Management of Unpredictability in the World of Journalism

Olivier PILMIS

Abstract. Journalistic work is confronted structurally with urgent situations. Unlike other sectors using just-in-time methods, here urgency is not only the result of random failures in the production cycle, it also relates to the nature of the commodity itself—current affairs—which must be handled within the context of a collective organization. Based on observations and interviews in the written press, this article examines how urgency impacts journalistic production on a daily basis. It brings to light attempts at serialization within this flow of unique products and the slim possibility of negotiating irreversibility—inherent in industrial processes. The solution to the problems posed by urgent situations principally stems from inventory management, emphasizing the central role of prediction making in situations where the content of the work is itself characterized by uncertainty.

Keywords. MANAGEMENT OF UNCERTAINTY—PREDICTION MAKING—URGENCY—JOURNALISM—ETHNOGRAPHY

> *"Not everybody realizes that a really good journalistic accomplishment requires at least as much 'genius' as any scholarly accomplishment, especially because of the necessity of producing at once and 'on order,' and because of the necessity of being effective …"*
>
> Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation" [1919] 2013: 96.

"News flash," "last minute," "breaking news," "special edition," etc., behind these various expressions lies the same idea: demonstrate the press's responsiveness and exhibit the urgency of journalistic activity where the outpouring of history constantly interrupts the peaceful passage of time. Many literary and cinematic representations convey this image of newspaper editorial offices, where frantic pursuits follow interrupted telephone calls, whether to celebrate the virtues of the "fourth estate" or to denounce the havoc wreaked by "chasing scoops." Journalism's professional myths save a place for the "daily coup," making the journalist faced with "urgency" out to be both a witness and a hero of the shocks of current affairs.[1] The press exhibits characteristics belonging to "heroic professions," which are by nature in the grip of urgent situations and sometimes of danger (Jeantet and Gernet 2011). At the heart of journalistic work, urgency is regularly evoked by actors to magnify the severe but

Translated by Toby Matthews

1. The terms "daily coup" ("*exploit quotidien*") and "urgency" ("*urgence*") feature as entries in the dictionary of journalistic myths created by Le Bohec (2000).

noble demands on them, in particular in the case of daily newspapers. "A newspaper is 'made' against the clock" (Padioleau 1985: 217) because "news is a depletable consumer product that must be made fresh daily" (Tuchman 1978: 31). Looking at urgency in journalistic work raises questions about its means of production.

Schudson (1989b) remarks that seeing journalists as just gatekeepers (White 1950) amounts to neglecting the issue of the *production* of information in favour of seeing it as just "already there," restricting the work of journalism to simply a selection exercise from the flow of news. He identifies three lines of enquiry drawn mostly from sociological studies of the production of information. The first, depicting a "political economy of the press," considers the result of this process in the light of the economic conditions newspaper companies operate in. Marked in the English-speaking world by *Manufacturing Consent* by Herman and Chomsky (1988), in France this approach is in line with the critical analysis of the journalistic field provided by Bourdieu (1996). The professional practices of journalists (Accardo 1995), as well as the mechanisms governing certain sectors of the press, such as the business press (Duval 2004) or medical press (Champagne and Marchetti 1994), are studied through the prism of the heteronomy of the media field threatened with interference from economic rationales.

The second approach, termed "culturological," relates journalistic work to the system of values shared communally within a society. This point of view is used, even tacitly, in research that explores the understanding media companies have of their readerships or audiences, or which aims to bring light to bear on the mindsets that allow journalists to measure the value of a piece of news. Although few studies have adopted this analysis systematically and at the exclusion of other approaches, the "culturological" conception often plays a part in how journalism is looked into, as in the studies by Tuchman (1978), Lemieux (2000) and, more recently, Hubé (2008) on the front page[2] as a conduit for attracting a readership.

Finally, the last line of research focuses on the "social organization of news work." This is firstly used in an interactionist sense, emphasizing the way in which news is brought to the attention of journalists. The issue of the sources of news thus becomes a central subject (Schlesinger 1992; Legavre 1992; Bastin 2008). But these studies resituate journalistic work in collective organizations that establish continuity of production particular to a bureaucratic and rationalized world,[3] whether this be in American (Tuchman 1978; Gans [1979] 2004), English (Tunstall 1971), French (Padioleau, 1985; Rozenblatt 1995; Lagneau, 2010), German (Hubé 2008) or Argentinean (Boczkowski 2010a) contexts. This article favours this latter research tradition and makes urgency and the problems it poses the point of access to a study of production and the conditions of its regularity.

The discrepancy between an insistence on this urgency and its generally minor place in sociological studies establishes it is a problem that has already been resolved. This may result from the impression editorial staff give observers that while uncertainty predominates, it is however very often calm that prevails. To adopt the

2. The front page is the first page of a newspaper. It is the equivalent of the "cover" in the magazine press.

3. This conforms to the intuition behind the study proposed by Max Weber at the beginning of the twentieth century (Bastin 2001), according to which media companies should be regarded as bureaucratic administrative managements of an industrial type.

distinction suggested by Rozenblatt (1995), urgency in the case of journalism is a "component of the rationalization of work," making "urgency in work" the normal regime for journalistic production. In contrast, "a work emergency" defined by a disruption induced by unforeseen events, such as an error or breakdown, is less common. Based on the example of journalism, it is possible to study how "urgency at work" becomes everyday[4] and show how it is necessary to curb "work emergencies." This means looking at the forms of rationalization of work within the bureaucracies that media companies are.

Broaching at the world of editorial staff from this perspective contributes to a sociology of economic activity that considers journalistic work to be an ordinary production process undermined by uncertainties and whose continuity it is important to ensure. The perspective adopted here is thus distinguished from approaches that consider uncertainty at the level of exchanges, from Keynesian reflections on the role of conventions in the functioning of financial markets (Keynes 1936) to research on the notion of "quality" (Karpik 1989; Stanziani 2005). More generally, the uncertainty at the heart of the "worlds of production" characterized by Salais and Storper (1993) is often studied in relation to demand, i.e., in relation to the requirements of exchange. Market uncertainty can thus be used to support the rational over-production strategies observed in the worlds of art and culture (Menger 1989). The latter worlds have always been used for the study of uncertainty within work itself as a source of both joy and torment, depending on whether it is the principle of the lucky chance or "fear of the blank page." Uncertainty results at the intimate level from creative activity where "a deadline is neither clear nor defined" and where numerous cases of unfinished works furnish examples (Menger 2009: 8; chap. VI).

While this ambiguous feeling towards unpredictability can be found in the press sector, it is distinguished from that of the artistic world insofar as uncertainty is not related to the creative outpouring of an artist, but is part of a collective and productive framework relating to the raw material used. Made up of parts of reality, these are transformed within editorial departments, as they flow through the hands of writers, heads of sections, sub-editors, typesetters, illustrators, etc. Above all, since the activity embraces the traits of industrial fluidity (Vatin 1987, 2008), interruptions to production and its non-completion are not feasible options. Production has certain unique properties, notably because it is directed towards the regular, sometimes even daily, creation of unique products. By providing an opportunity to revisit the meaning of urgency in industrial worlds, journalism furnishes an illustration of a production world where the properties of the raw material and time constraints inherent to the production process make it inevitable that urgency becomes everyday. As such, journalism, and even more so daily newspaper journalism, is a special sphere in which to observe practical methods for mastering and rationalizing production processes. This study sheds light on individual judgements in uncertain situations, in terms of profits and above all the material and symbolic costs associated with the various terms of this judgement.

4. In his introduction to the work of Weber, Grossein (1996: 123–4) emphasizes that the common translation of the Weberian concept of *Veralltäglichung* as "routinization" poses at least two problems: the first is that it gives it a pejorative connotation that is absent from the pen of Weber; the second is the attenuation of its opposition to a charismatic authority which is defined precisely by its extra-ordinary character, i.e., extra-daily. He favoured translating it as "*quotidianisation*" translated into English here as "becoming everyday."

Field and material

This article is based on the use of material collected during ethnographic observations in newspaper editorial departments.[5] In addition to providing the keys to understanding journalistic work as it is done *in situ*, the observations furnish concrete examples likely to inform the interviews, beyond the consciously thrilling or deliberately alarmist accounts that journalists regularly provide when referring to their professional group and its changing shape. These observations were carried out within four different editorial departments. Firstly a paid national daily title (PND) with a "traditional" (print) editorial department and an online (web) editorial department: systematic observations in the form of note taking during full work days were done over the course of more than three weeks (in September–October 2010 and then in July 2011). These were added to more intermittent observations. This example serves here as the benchmark for my argument (it will be referred to as the *paid daily*).

It is compared to three other areas: a free title from the PND, which also has print and web editorial departments alongside each other, along with several local editions (*free daily*, two weeks of observations[6] in January 2011); a general news, purely internet-based, web site, i.e., not alongside a "traditional" editorial department (*news site*, one week of observation split into two visits carried out in August 2010 and June 2011) and finally a specialist monthly press title whose content concentrates on economic and social news (*specialist monthly*, ten days of observation between October and November 2011).

The study is also based on the use of interviews with members of editorial staff (writers, proof-readers, typesetters, sub-editors, editors in chief and managing editors). Twenty-five interviews were recorded with others carried out in an informal way. In each case the objective was to capture the nature of journalistic work in editorial departments, based on recent articles, discussions observed, etc.

Headlines and deadlines: The urgency of unique products

The shortage of time is a characteristic across the economy: it contributes even to forming the subject of economic science according to the classic definition given by Robbins (1945: 15). In the case of the press, the continuity of production characteristic of bureaucratic and rationalized worlds collides with the imperative of news

5. This article lays out some results from a study financed by a grant from the Département des Études, de la Prospective et des Statistiques (DEPS) (Department of Studies, Forecasting and Statistics) in the Ministry of Culture and Communication. A later version was presented at the "Travail et activité" ("Work and Activity") seminar at the Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense. I would like to thank the participants and organizers and in particular François Vatin for their suggestions as well as the anonymous reviewers from the *Revue Française de Sociologie* and Gwenaële Rot for his many suggestions during the completion of the manuscript.

6. The variation in observation length is essentially related to the size of the editorial departments, and notably the number of news sections they accommodate and which contribute to making more or less complex work worlds.

production. The exchanges are born from the duality of newspaper titles, which are both "media organizations" subjected to commercial imperatives and the requirements of the physical production and distribution of newspapers, and "news organizations" which themselves are home to work that is by nature non-routine (Tunstall 1971). A "media organization" imposes deadlines and imperatives on the "news organization" that are by definition rigid, which leads to the rationing of time to the extent that it becomes a chronically scarce resource. Portraying journalism as being governed by urgency means focussing on an ultimately restricted number of its properties.

The absence of routine in the world of current affairs is firstly linked to the principles of production, which like artistic and cultural sectors, is akin to an economy of unique products:[7] the repetition of production events does not lead to identical products. The diversity of production is evident from a comparison of different titles. The mechanisms that preside over the functioning of the media field establish a relationship between competitors blending similarities and differences. Scoop chasing and the circular circulation of news (Bourdieu 1996) coexist. This necessitates standing out from the competition while maintaining a consistent foundation, highlighting the identity and editorial line of a press title without risking being "overtaken by the competition" (Lemieux 2000).[8] This need for variety is then expressed at the level of the different editions of the same newspaper, magazine or review which should be recognized as unique by readers—each being unique within a common identity. Each new product is distinguished from the previous one, in particular at the level of its front page or cover, which, aside from the date, defines its *uniqueness*. Touching on the reasoning governing the choice of headline, a member of the editorial staff of the *paid daily* thus tells how a tacit rule stipulates that a main headline[9] cannot be used again within five years of its last use.[10]

The uniqueness of journalistic production should not be seen however as simply the consequence of how the sector functions, in which novelty is a cardinal value, in the same way as in the arts sector; nor as a simple manifestation of economic mechanisms favouring competition through quality and thus through originality. It is a corollary of the raw materials that fuel the production process, which are to a certain extent unpredictable but which delineate the outlines of production: what lies inside a newspaper depends on "what has recently happened" (current affairs or "news"). Wire stories and news items inundate press editorial departments on a daily basis and reflect innumerable events, local and global, trivial and dramatic

7. The expression "unique products" (Drucker 1954: 82–93) would seem more appropriate than that of "prototypes" to describe the principles specific to production in these economic sectors, in that the latter term commonly refers only to a model produced ahead of mass production. The particularities of such economies, designated prototypical, have been highlighted in particular by Anderson and Faulkner (1987), D. Bielby and W.T. Bielby (1999), François (2004), based on artistic examples which constitute the purest illustrations.

8. The "relevant" competitors vary depending on the title and its position in the media landscape (how prestigious a title is, whether it is also more or less generalist or specialized, aimed at one particular section of the population rather than another, etc.), but also depending on columns within the same title. During editorial conferences, certain titles are thus greatly discussed and scrutinized while others are passed over in silence.

9. The main headline ("*manchette*") is the lead headline on the front page, and generally relates to the news item that is considered the most important.

10. Informal interview with a "Culture" journalist, *paid daily,* 17 September 2010.

and in numerous domains. In the form of a stream, the "wires" from the major news agencies being a notable one, events feed journalistic work. This in part is based, in the daily life of an organization or work group, on phenomena that are by definition characterized by interruptions. In contrast to the social sciences, which focus on patterns and structures and are hampered in this respect by such caesuras, journalism is a discourse that, by vocation, is built on events (Bensa and Fassin 2002). That a train arrives on time is not news, its derailment is: to use the well-known expression, "when a dog bites a man, that is not news, because it happens so often. But if a man bites a dog, that is news."[11] From this perspective, news stems from interruptions and the material journalists deal with is characterized by the considerable *unpredictability* inherent in its "eventful" nature. Uniqueness and unpredictability, at the centre of the activity of "news organizations," conflict with the characteristics of press "companies."

Beyond the product's properties, urgent situations also stem from the production process itself and the deadlines and schedules it imposes. Whatever its frequency, the work of a press title is subjected to twin constraints. Firstly a spatial constraint as a result of the physical limitations of a newspaper, which can only contain a certain number of pages, each of which can only accommodate a defined maximum number of words.[12] Secondly a time constraint, from the fateful moment of completion of an activity cycle that is the "putting to bed," the moment of crystallization of journalistic production that theoretically accompanies the issuing of the "*bons à tirer*" (final corrected proofs passed for press) and sending to the printers. In this there is a confrontation, contradiction even, between editorial requirements and manufacturing constraints. The struggle against production delays is particularly apparent in the case of daily newspapers. But it can be found in similar terms within editorial departments where production is more spaced apart, right up to specialist monthlies.

Whether this amounts to "real stress" or a "rush to finish,"[13] respect for the deadlines associated with going to press is an imperative of journalistic activity. The deadline for going to press is a critical point that cannot be indefinitely extended, so much so that as it approaches it generates a rush of activity to fix the edition. When journalists cite urgent situations, they say they result from the conjunction of three phenomena: irreversibility, uniqueness and above all unpredictability. A journalist in the politics section of the *paid daily* recollects this in a specific case:

> Here's a personal example from when I was on duty on Christmas Eve 2009. Some news broke … what was it? It was a ruling from the Conseil Constitutionnel (Constitutional Council): a part of the law that had been messed up, something crappy, which broke at 8.30pm

11. The precise origins of this expression, well known in editorial departments, are disputed.

12. At first glance, the online press would seem to be somewhat freed from the constraints of the printed press (Datchary 2010), the imperative to respect a certain number of words does not guide journalists' activity as strictly. As the observations made within online press web sites has shown, taking account of "production formats" (Lemieux 2000) does occur. These are defined by the time the readership can, in the eyes of the editorial staff, devote to reading: the physical constraints here are reflected in terms of the time constraints readers face. In the eyes of one of the managers of the *news site*, an article that is "too long" strongly risks being abandoned while being read, which would signify an editorial failure, and, moreover, since funding is based on advertising receipts, a commercial one (observation and interview, *news site*, 24 June 2011).

13. These two expressions were used by a sub-editor on the *free daily* (interview of 26 January 2011) and the editor of the *specialist monthly* (interview of 4 November 2010) to describe the time of going to press.

> eh … It took us twenty minutes to work out what to do and how, with the duty editorial director. We started the story. We were in the tightest of spots. I wrote the story with the junior who was working on the edition. I was writing the story and he was checking it behind me. There were two of them, one who was thinking of the headline and the other who took the last version and fixed the stuff, and they made me make loads of corrections. That's how a story that arrives 5 to 10 minutes before going to press is done. We were happy. And the next day in the editorial meeting, they couldn't get over it. But it's often done like that … It's regularly done like that in the "Foreign" section when they've got something going down. Us in "Politics" we can change stuff at the last minute, its one of the great traditions of the daily. I'm giving you this example because it popped into my head and I was involved, so I remember it, but it happens every week eh! Not necessarily every day. (Journalist, "Politics" section, *paid daily,* 24 September 2010.)

Ever present within editorial departments, such a threat poses some risk to journalistic production. Although it remains a mind-set that actors use to describe their activity or defend their interests within an editorial department, urgency is nevertheless regularly harnessed within the latter. Often touted for its potential, its adverse consequences only occur sporadically.

Negotiating the uniqueness and irreversibility of production: Pre- and postponed fabrication

While urgency stems decisively from the conjunction of three aspects of production, combating it requires alleviating at least one of them. The recurrence of certain journalistic forms in newspaper columns represents a means of counteracting the uniqueness of journalistic products by serializing production. Prefabrication is a solution used by the press. This is evident in particular in the use of "formats" (Gans [1979] 2004; Schudson 1989a; Lemieux 2000). These may relate to the physical space devoted to an article, measured in the number of characters, *feuillets*[14] or pages. A particular type of article (referred to locally as a "*repère*," "*encadré*," "*cadrage*," "*express*," etc.) is generally associated with a predetermined format—in length, layout and also in tone and writing style. Templates and narrative conventions guide the activity of journalists and create a repertoire of solutions on which to draw. Within the *free daily*, a "template bible" thus summarizes the "style of recurrent layout elements." The document offers 68 different templates for news pages, each corresponding to a particular layout of elements making up a page ('in brief' columns, articles, illustrations, etc.). It also outlines 24 possible versions of the front page. Pre-existing responses to daily issues, the formats are also the subject of regular critical discussion by journalists. Denounced and ridiculed as leading to a formatting of work and ultimately of thought, the formats, and notably their size, are the subject of conflicts between writers and sub-editors demonstrating the limits of prefabrication in the actors' eyes.

The serialization seems even more evident when accompanied by the repetition of certain subjects, referred to as "*marroniers*" ["chestnut trees"] (because they flower annually): such as Christmas shopping, holiday departures, philosophy tests as part of the baccalaureate, etc. It is thus possible to rely on tried and tested recipes.

14. A *feuillet* is a typographic unit of measurement corresponding to 1,500 characters (including spaces).

Laughing at work constraints

The wall of the offices of the *paid daily* are sometimes adorned with sheets of A4 showing the paper's masthead in the manner of a front page and displaying a remark from one of the members of the department in the style of a "quote of the day." As well as in-jokes and humorous comments on the news, many of them focus on aspects of work and in particular on the constraints imposed by formats. From a journalist, who I am told had a column with an unusual look: "I don't have a column, I have a G-string."; another: "Why cut when you can fill?"; a third: "I'm at 4,500 and I still haven't started." a fourth: "1,800 characters, that's a haiku."; and so on. (*Paid daily,* observations from September 2010.)

Serialization remains proscribed in journalism which, by nature, is based on novelty, albeit relative. Despite prefabrication and repetition, *identically* replicating articles from previous years is impossible, something that represents a limit to serial production. The press thus shares certain aspects of the automotive industry, which combines different production principles within the same organization: standardized production based on a handful of base models, and the principles of manufacture of apparently unique products through the adaptation of these models to the demands of each consumer by offering options (Drucker 1954).

Similarly, the production process is not completely irreversible. "Putting to bed" imposes a time limit to work, which in some cases and in certain circumstances can be negotiated. Managing mistakes and the unexpected incidents that pepper work phases, in particular the latter, involves coordination between editorial staff and printers. A telephone call can be enough to push back the physical production of a newspaper. The use of means for relieving irreversibility is not however without costs. These are firstly direct, through the costs involved in late production. Under commercial contracts between newspaper titles and printers, a delay in sending a newspaper's pages involves the payment of penalties. The reality of this cost, and thus the reality of the threat it poses to companies depends in part on the length and strength of economic relations between printers and companies, in line with the classic findings of the theory of transaction costs (Williamson 1981; Lorenz 1996). Direct costs are incurred more systematically when delays mean the destruction of printing plates made by the printers.[15] Relaxing the irreversibility of production is thus related to a calculation between the "value" of news and the monetary cost of including it in the newspaper's columns. There are also indirect costs of reversibility, through a decline in sales if the whole readership cannot be reached.[16] Newspaper distribution depends on carrying out two time-consuming operations: printing and delivery. In this context, a printing delay can mean a reduction in

15. The production manager at the *free daily* estimated the cost of a plate (a *double* page negotiated with one printer) to be 1,500€ (interview of 24 January 2011). "Production" marks the last stage of the editorial process and in particular includes the final checking of pages (column alignment, print quality and/or the reproduction of photos, etc.) and sending the pages to the printers.

16. A fall in sales has economic consequences on two fronts relating to the duality of a market divided into a market of advertisers and a market of readers (depending on the form of each title this can range from exclusively one or the other of these). A newspaper title thus generally offers both news and advertising space, meeting the demand of both readers and advertisers (Le Floch and Sonnac 2005).

"Putting to bed" at 10.30pm or midnight?

After 10pm there are only a half-dozen people in the editorial department in charge of putting the paper to bed. The editor in chief tells me that the newspaper is "only formally" put to bed at 10.30pm, but that the paper can be sent to the printers any time up to midnight: pages sent can be "put right" as long as printing has not begun. It is possible to act even later: "Everything happens contractually anyway." The first and second editions mechanism makes it possible, but the most complete copies, those printed last are mostly available from Parisian newsstands. Finally, it is possible to suspend printing in any of five print centres in France, "which is important if there is genuinely news." (*Paid daily,* observation from 15 September 2010.)

circulation, distribution of incomplete copies and even in the worst cases cancelling distribution of the newspaper.

In the case of the printed press, lifting the irreversibility obstacle is the ultimate risky and expensive recourse. The emergence of the online press apparently modifies this picture. The question of putting a title to bed is not raised here with the same rigour because of the absence of the constraints of printing and distribution. Publication has gradually moved from a daily process, characterized by putting online the complete journalistic contents at a particular point in the day, generally in the morning, to another at several times a day, characterized by news updates throughout the day (Boczkowski 2010a). "Rolling news production," which contributes to transforming the "time cycle governing news production" into an "erratic and endless cycle." (Klinenberg 2000: 69), rests on the nature of the readership of the online press, which is largely made up of people looking at the news at their places of work several times a day.[17] The ability to update a site offers the possibility to correct and amend an article, such as the one a journalist from the news website devoted to the Haute Autorité pour la Diffusion des Oeuvres et la Protection des Droits sur Internet (HADOPI) (High Authority for the Distribution of Works and the Protection of Rights on the Internet).

> There's a nice side to news that you can embellish during the day. Me, I was doing this thing which was completely trivial … As I cover HADOPI, at some time someone on Twitter or on a very obscure blog one Sunday evening says 'But look at HADOPI's logo, they've pirated it from something because it's a font (I'm a typographer) that was created by someone specially for France Télécom some time ago, and they've gone and used it' So, if you like, on the Monday, you do a little story where you call HADOPI who say "No, not at all." Then, you embellish it because you see other blogs and other journalists working on it and reporting stories. Me, I contacted the font's creator, through Facebook I think, who told me: "Yeah, it's true. That's it." So, I got the sheet with the font he created on it. So you embellish the story. Then you go on the HADOPI site and you see they've just changed the font in their logo, so you put this in. And then they say "Yes but it's a project, it's a draft that was created a week ago." You go to the Institut de la Propriété Industrielle's (Institute of Industrial Property) site and you see that they registered the trademark and the logo a year earlier. So you put this in, etc., you take screenshots and everything. … There's a jubilant side to this for you because each time you're adding something. It's a real laugh. (Journalist, *news site,* interview of 8 October 2010.)

17. The online press has thus been described as *news at work* (Boczkowski 2010b). The *monitoring* software that online newsrooms possess (for example *Google Chart Tools* and *Chartbeat*) reveal the relative spread of consumption of online news throughout the day (observations, *free daily* and *paid daily).*

First published at 12.42pm, the article on HADOPI was then added to three times on the same day at 1.55, 2.40 and 8.30pm respectively. The absence of a print deadline in the same sense as the printed press gives rise to a quite paradoxical cycle: less characterized by irreversibility in favour of corrections that can be made to an article, without the requirements of physical manufacture the cycle can be shortened by the accelerated publication of texts. The reduction of urgency, in the sense of the word used by printed press journalists, is accompanied by an increase in the speed material is made available to the public. The opportunity to reverse changes or correct articles which are no longer set in stone changes the contours of urgency more than they eliminate it.

"Hot" and "cold": Journalism's two cognitive categories

Overcoming the constraints imposed by the uniqueness of the products and the irreversibility that characterizes going to press is thus a delicate undertaking which on the one hand confronts the specificities of journalistic work and on the other, the editorial and commercial requirements of diffusion to a readership. Ultimately, the restriction of urgency is principally based on the advance management of the unpredictability of the material that sustains journalistic production. This firstly draws on the cognitive categories and professional classifications that journalists use to understand events, accord them greater or lesser importance, and render their coverage more or less essential. Adopting an anthropological approach, Tuchman (1973) emphasized the principles of "di-vision" that are at the heart of journalistic work and which enable the categorization of events.[18] The first fundamental dichotomy distinguishes "hot" news from "cold" news. Defining *a priori* the criteria on which an infallible taxonomy can be established is difficult, nay impossible: "hot" and "cold" are practical more than theoretical categories that are repeated in an insistent way in the indigenous discourse for describing certain subjects and items.[19] They guide journalistic activity and form the basis on which hierarchies within the flow of news are established. News agencies contribute to constructing the newsworthiness of a piece of information by opting for a particular label ("news flash," "urgent," "bulletin," etc.) rather than another (Lagneau 2010). In this way they guide the judgements journalists bring to bear on facts by defining them as more or less urgent. Editorial departments are not independent of the rest of the journalistic field: on the contrary, they play a large part in the division of labour. By dividing the need to provide coverage by degree, the establishment of a dichotomy between "hot" and "cold" news contributes to the rationalization of journalistic production.

Shared by the whole community of journalists working at a press title because of occupational socialization at journalism schools or spending time in the editorial

18. In an illuminating article on the struggle to establish legitimate principles for the division of the social world and on the relationship between scientific and practical principles that underpin the definition of a border, Bourdieu ([1980] 1991: 221) makes "di-vision: a magical and thus essentially social act of *diacrisis* which introduced by *decree* a decisive discontinuity in natural continuity (between the regions of space but also between ages, sexes, etc.)."

19. For Tuchman (1973: 114) the two categories, "hot" and "cold" refer to "significant" and "interesting" news respectively.

"What's the lead?"

As it does every day, the editorial conference begins at 10am. Around a large table are sat the heads of sections and editorial department managers, a few journalists who take part in the editorial conference are either stood or sat along a wall. After going over the positive and negative points about "yesterday's" paper (the one on sale on newsstands as the meeting takes place), one of the deputy editors asks the room as always "What's the lead?"[20] The head of the "Society" section proposes a story on micro-housing. He gives the floor to the story's author who explains the content of the story in great detail. The section head concludes by saying it is "our story."[21] The manager in charge of the "Economy" section states that the report he would like to support on sweatshops is also "our story." The head of the "Foreign Affairs" section brings up the European summit that is taking place at that moment. The subject is set aside when one of the editors remarks that several recent front pages had been devoted to this subject. The discussion continues until the editorial director takes the floor: "I'm going with the economics thing … the sweatshops." One of the reasons he gives is the need to publish it as soon as possible. "We've had the micro-housing for a long time too," objects the head of the "Society" section. They come down in favour of the sweatshops nevertheless. Micro-housing is kept back for the following day. The meeting ends a little before 11am. At 11.30am, they learn that some French people working for Areva have been kidnapped in Niger. It is almost immediately accepted, without discussion, that this will be the next day's lead. The other stories are postponed to the following days. (*Paid daily,* observation on 16 September 2010.)

department itself, these categories are at the heart of the naturalization of social judgements—a concealing process—making journalistic coverage the "natural" product of the objective and internal properties of an event. They ensure that journalists' judgements converge. In such circumstances, changes to the hierarchy of news in the columns of the next day's paper do not generally elicit recrimination or incomprehension, or even discussion. They are instead occasions to reassert adherence to common principles of evaluating and appraising events (Lester 1980). The opposition between "hot" and "cold" enables the classification of news and the definition of an order of priority within it. This is even truer since it is possible to identify different degrees of "heat," i.e., the importance of a news item. The more a news story is "hot," even "boiling," the more quickly it will be processed, taking into account the qualities granted to it within the editorial department. "Hot" and "cold" describe two poles from which a *continuum* can be drawn, as much as two elements of a dichotomy. It is what guides meetings within the *paid daily,* in particular those during which the different subjects proposed are assessed in light of a need for variety, a search for originality and the greater or lesser necessity to publish without delay.

The local association between "heat," "urgency" and "newsworthiness" can be used strategically to contest symbolic hierarchies in an editorial department. Based on the prestige accorded to their subject matter, a section's influence is evident in

20. The "lead [story]" or "opening story" ("événement" or "*ouverture*" in French) is the subject that will occupy the opening pages of a newspaper or magazine. It is generally the most important news, proclaimed as such on the front page.

21. "Our story" means one or more articles that result from investigations or reports carried out on the initiative of one or more of the newspaper's journalists.

editorial conferences during which sections compete for the front page. Some find it easier to assert the importance of the subjects they cover and so the need to afford them the best possible exposure: the one devoted to the "leads." Highlighting the particularly "hot" nature of a story contributes to challenging this established order. The symbolic hierarchy between sections thus clashes with what the actors perceive to be an objective one, the one defined by the "hotness" of stories, and which implies a greater or lesser urgency to publish them. An editorial change, that occurred in the *paid daily,* demonstrates the different rationales: the urgency argument plays an important role in the late decision to transfer the front pages from the "Economy" section to the "Culture" section, outside of the normal times for deliberation and for this reason eliciting the ire of the head of the "Economy" section.

On the front page: CAC 40 or Larry Clark?

During the editorial conference, the manager of the "Economy" section indicates at the outset that "it's a good day for the CAC 40. … It's something we've been working on for more than a month but there's an ideal news hook[22] today." The head of the "Culture" section for his part suggests a story about an exhibition of the work of the photographer Larry Clark that was for over-18s only. The real subject would be "the legions of decency and the new morality," involving collaboration with the "Society" section. At the end of the meeting the case is not clear-cut. I learn later that the story on the CAC 40 won out. In the early afternoon, a private meeting takes place in the editorial director's office between him, his deputies and the head of the "Culture" section. At 4.30pm, I learn that the front page will be devoted to Larry Clark: the decision was taken a little before 3pm. The "CAC 40" report would appear the following week, on an unspecified date. At around 7.30pm I come across one of the deputy editors trying to assuage the anger of the head of the "Economy" section. The latter is strongly reproaching the former for having "misled" them and for "pulling" the story they had done a lot of work on "for no reason." Later, the editorial director justifies this late change to me: "Editorially, it's better. Commercially, it's better. It fits the paper's identity better. And it has to be done for the exhibition opening, there'd be no point in reviving it later." He tells me that "those in 'Eco' understood this very well," in particular because their report "goes out tomorrow." The story on the CAC 40 would indeed make the front page, but a month later on the 10th November. (*Paid daily,* observation on 6 October 2010.)

No other change of a decision taken in an editorial conference was observed during our study without news breaking elsewhere. This is what angered the head of the "Economy" section faced with the "Culture" section having succeeded in convincing the editor of the urgent need to cover the exhibition *on that day*. The frequent reminders over the following days of the net increase in sales in comparison to normal (an "18% increase" is the figure that most often circulated) could be considered an *a posteriori* justification aimed at ending any controversy.[23]

Disruption to the production cycle is generally the consequence of interruptions resulting from certain facts. However, during this study, there were very few events

22. A "news hook" ("*accroche d'actu*" in French) means an event that justifies bringing up, and sometime exhuming, some news piece, story or article.

23. This example also shows the limits of an economic conception of a press responding to demand. Even if the readers' demographic profiles are known, their expectations cannot be anticipated. Sales figures only confirm or refute the validity of decisions *a posteriori*, even if they provide an understanding in a general way of whether "a type" of story "does well."

leading to this type of upheaval (and to a change to the front page): a disagreement between the French government and the European Commissioner Viviane Reding (15 September 2010), hostage taking in Niger (16 September 2010), and terrorist attacks on Moscow airport (24 January 2011) as well as in Oslo and on the island of Utoya (22 July 2011). This comparative rarity is reflected in the judgement of one of the sub-editors of the *paid daily*, for whom "it's still uncommon for a story to break like that without warning."[24] Gans ([1979] 2004: 88) suggested the same by pointing out that two thirds of stories published in 1973 in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* had been anticipated. Prediction making represents a second way to combat unpredictability, which makes it not a matter of coming to terms with it, but of reducing unpredictability and by routinizing interruptions by events. The role of anticipation generally challenges the nature itself of the events confronting journalists.

The "event" in question: The risks and uncertainties of journalistic material

Newspaper columns are filled with events that can be typified by the old Knightian distinction between risk and uncertainty. Knight (1921) distinguished risk from uncertainty depending on whether or not it is possible to probabilize it. Applied to the world of journalism, the taxonomy identifies events that arise *ex nihilo*—unpredictable in this respect—from others that, in contrast, are predictable but whose contents remain in part unknown—they are thus risky. While the occurrence of a railway accident is unpredictable, the date of an election is revealed far in advance, and while you have to wait for the end of the election to know the result, it is possible to put together the probable results of it.[25] Unpredictable events cannot be anticipated, in contrast to those that are risky which makes them available for early inclusion on the media agenda (Tuchman 1973). Anticipation is thus a central dimension of the activity of editorial departments: it encourages journalistic production by extirpating urgent situations. It is not based solely on the representations of the individuals staffing editorial departments, but on all the processes and mechanisms that contribute to making the unexpected everyday by integrating it as much as possible into normal bureaucratic operations. The programming sessions, editorial conferences and edition and front page meetings combine to separately articulate life in a daily newspaper.

These meetings, which take place weekly in the *paid* and *free dailies*, highlight the extent of forward planning of future lead stories and news. Some lack enough precise information to be covered (the closure of a national daily), others relate to describing a particular piece of news associated with a particular time (the motor show or a budget presentation), others are leads that carry some risk (the election of a leader of a political party). Finally, they are permanently under pressure from

24. Sub-editor, *paid daily,* interview of 15 September 2010.

25. The attention journalists pay to polls, which can even be co-produced by editorial departments, while they provide an understanding of the similarities between their respective categories of inquiry and classification (Bourdieu [1971] 1984; Champagne 1990: 134–40), can also be looked at from the perspective of the anticipation of events.

Next week's news

The forward planning meeting takes place on Thursday at 4pm. It brings together one of the deputy editors (DE), most of the heads of sections and a few others. While waiting for the participants, who arrive at intervals, the DE asks the head of "Media" about the rumours of a national daily being sold. After a brief exchange, he concludes by leaving the question to later: "OK, unless [your sources] have lied to you, it won't be in the next fortnight."

During the meeting, stories and dates rapidly follow on from each other, sometimes clashing. With a diary before him, in which he makes notes of everyone's proposals, the DE leads the debates. "Sunday? Politics? Culture?" The head of the international section speaks: "We're going to do a chapter on the victory of one of the Miliband brothers over the other [in the fight for leadership of the British Labour Party]. The only risk is if there is a major clash. We'll do a little news item on Saturday to trail it and then again on Sunday for Monday." He adds sarcastically: "And a little on AQIM [Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb] with the execution of the first hostage [in Niger]." The DE replies, as if impervious to the black humour: "In that case, that will be the lead."

When "Wednesday" is discussed, the head of the "Economy" section speaks without being asked: "It could be Tuesday too. Tuesday is the presentation of the budget. They're anticipating a two-point reduction in the deficit as a share of GDP, something never before seen in France. The thinking is to open with a portrait of a rich but not ultra-rich French family to show how income can be optimized. … The loopholes and workarounds would be covered on [pages] 2–3. And the traditional presentation of the budget on page 4." The DE immediately asks him if he had thought of an illustration: "Plan to do one! Because when it's a 'loophole' it's complicated." The head of "Economy" finishes his presentation: "On Wednesday we'll cover the ratification as usual." The DE then turns to the head of the "Society" section, and broaches the issue of immigration: "It'd be good to do it on Monday for Tuesday. But do you want to do it on Sunday for Monday?" Faced with silence from his interlocutor he adds cynically: "Well, let's hope a hostage disappears otherwise we've got nothing." The head of the "Economy" sections attempts to reassure him: "On Monday we've got a double [page] on the research tax credit."

The lead for the following Thursday is then discussed. The "Economy" head immediately intercedes: "the car"—it is indeed the opening day of the Motor Show. "We've put together something original, a four-page lead story on the electric car." The head of another section states that he "has a portrait on the inventor of the [first hybrid car]." The question of whether to combine the two immediately arises. The "Economy" head concludes by reminding that in any event "it's a four-page story." (Editorial department, *paid daily,* 22 September 2010.)

unpredictable developments such as the hostage taking raised during the meeting in a black humoured way to both alleviate the drama itself and the disruption it causes to the editorial department. Although crucial in a daily newspaper regularly subjected to breaking news, there is also prediction making in more periodic titles: it forms part of the meetings in the *specialist monthly*. In each case it is evidence that the expression "put on the media agenda" is not simply a metaphor: diaries and calendars are actually consulted by the actors.

Prediction making does not just guide interactions between the actors in editorial departments, but also guides those between members of editorial departments and their sources. This link is even more methodical when the connections between public arenas and the sections that make up a newspaper title are stronger (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988). The desire of members of editorial departments to programme lead stories converge with the preoccupations of journalistic sources, for whom obtaining

the best possible media coverage is an issue requiring collaboration with journalists, even a coproduction of news (Schlesinger 1992). There are numerous strategies used by information sources to create a lead story: for example, the disclosure of speeches and announcements before they have been made, more or less false confidences provided off the record (Legavre 1992). Newsworthiness is as much a property of the work done by journalists and their sources as it is of the facts themselves, conforming to the idea that the media are a condition for the existence of a news event (Neveu and Quéré 1996). Thanks to decisions, such as making a story a front page one rather than an inside page one, playing with headline sizes, measurement in terms of column inches, etc., a media outlet can contribute to creating "news events" where there barely seems to be one.

This dual perspective of creating "newsworthiness" and of prediction making also materializes in the "fridges" and other "morgues" where articles that are already written are kept, dropped from a previous edition or waiting for a "news hook" that would provide them with a new relevance. Here again the use of a term like "fridge" is not neutral: it refers to the place where "fresh" or "cold" products are preserved in anticipation of the moment when they will be "reheated" in response to a particular demand. Within the *paid daily,* an article on a play, which a film star can no longer take part in because of his death, could remain in the "fridge" for several days while the show remains announced—but when indefinitely postponed will never be published.[26] Like food products, journalistic articles have an expiry date which, once passed, prohibits their publication. As for the "morgue," that is where the already-written obituaries of leading personalities (male and female politicians, captains of industry and business leaders, stars of entertainment and sport, etc.) are kept, for whom, because of their status, age and state of health, the title must be in a position to quickly or even instantly produce a posthumous biography. The journalistic work generated by such events is sometimes carried out well in advance of when they occur.

> It's true that the first time I worked on Desmond Tutu's obit was seven years ago … But I can assure you: Mandela can die at any time and twenty pages are ready!"[27] (Journalist, "International" section, *paid daily*, 8 October 2010).

Anticipating means relying on the *certainty* of certain events. But prediction making is not the extent of all the techniques for countering unpredictability. The sudden occurrence of an event raises certain crucial questions for a newspaper, such as "making" it front page news rather than another story (Gans [1979] 2004; Hubé 2008) when the information about it is incomplete—in particular, during the first hours and minutes following accidents, attacks and disasters, during which a (material, financial and above all human) toll is gradually established which defines the journalistic significance by indexing its gravity. In such a context, the decision is regularly a *gamble* that is always susceptible to leading to a mistake. The assistant director of the editorial department of the *paid daily* describes the conditions in which he took a decision to devote a front page to the double attack on the 22 July 2011 in Norway at a point when information was limited and when the death toll (nearly 80 deaths) in particular was unknown:

26. Editorial department of the *paid daily*, September–October 2010.

27. This statement was, in fact, partly disproved when Nelson Mandela died on the 5 December 2013. Announced in France at around 11pm, that is after the *paid daily* had gone to press, this could not be mentioned in the following day's edition and was finally only dealt with in the one dated 7 December 2013, which devoted precisely 20 pages to it in addition to the front page.

> The Norway night was a Friday evening. I think the first news broke around 4–4.15pm, it said "Explosion in the centre of Oslo!" The shootings, at around 7.15pm. So, at some point we had to decide to move quickly, to redo the layout, that I should do an editorial, and that we had to find someone to leave immediately …
>
> … Was there a moment that made you hesitate? Was there something, I don't know, like a critical threshold …?
>
> Well, it wasn't the number of deaths because we didn't have the number of deaths. So, the additional reason was that the other options, the lead that we had ready, was on motorways, something that was not bad on tollbooths. We didn't know that it was a lone killer. We didn't know anything. It could have been Islamists, we knew nothing … I said to myself "I can't go with a front page on tollbooths with this mess!" because, you see, at some point you have to ask yourself "what's going to be your cover? What's going to be your news …, real news? What are people going to be interested in? What will they be talking about?" At a given moment, you have to go with your gut instinct. Here, it was Norway. There were two incidents. But when we decided, there were only four deaths, for example, you see. But here we felt … I told myself "OK …" I felt it was quite a big thing.
>
> At the same time, when you receive that despatch: "Explosion in the centre of Oslo!" strictly speaking it could have been a pipe that had exploded …
>
> So, the pipe. That too, from experience, when it's a pipe, you know quite quickly because of the gas company, because of all that. And then, you read the despatches carefully. What was complicated was that we had no one either on the spot or in the region. Often you call a bloke, he can go, he can listen to the local radio, all that. Here it was more complicated, we just had the despatches. And then, you tell yourself: "Yes there's the extreme right, that's plausible, it's not completely impossible." But, at one point, yes, it's still a bit of a miracle. At some point, you have to make the right decision. The risk is that you either overreact or don't react enough. Myself, I prefer, within limits, to take the risk of overreacting. In general, you can play with the front page, with the size of the headline and all that, if in the end it's not so significant. But to do only three columns [on] Oslo, that would have been a bit odd. (Assistant director of the editorial department, *paid daily*, 26 July 2011.)

In these circumstances, the decision is based decisively on an *ad hoc* assessment of the costs associated with a mistake. "Ignoring" an event that defines the next day's news story weakens the symbolic capital of a title and is accompanied by poor sales on newsstands. Within the editorial department of the *paid daily* in the days following the attacks there was plenty of sarcasm and ridicule mocking competitors who had not accorded the story the importance that was revealed to be its due.

The gambling rationale, in the case of journalism, can take another form that is not based on the "significance" of the event (as in the case of the Norwegian attacks) but on its content. When certain risky events are imminent, work is often organized according to hypotheses concerning their outcomes. How these bets turn out varies depending on newspaper title, as shown by coverage of the same story by two different editorial departments: one in the *paid daily* where these observations were made and another belonging to an online news website.

Coverage of the same story by the two editorial departments results in different processes. For the online press website liable to take part in a race for a scoop in the case of news "breaking" at the end of the morning, anticipation is based on the advance writing of an article relating to the event and interpreting and commenting on it. A daily printed newspaper is not in the same situation. Prediction is based on space, with different possible layouts depending on the identity of the winner, which defines the significance of the story and determines the number of pages that will be devoted to it (a single page or three). Nevertheless, neither of these editorial departments is taken by surprise by the awarding of the Nobel Prize: taking into account

Coverage of the Nobel Peace Prize in the printed and online press

At 6.15pm, the "Foreign" section provides its predictions for the next day to the management. For the head of the section: "If the Nobel Prize is given to the Chinese dissident it should be the lead … if not we'll do a one page story." Those who "will be on the list" are reviewed.

The following day, 8 October 2010, the editorial conference brings up the day's front page: immediately the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize is raised and the different possible formulas. Shortly after the committee meeting, towards 11.00am, someone arrives in the section: "Have you seen the Nobel Prize? It's Liu [Xiaobo] It's great!" The two heads of the "Foreign" section then discuss the length of the story: "three pages." The newspaper's China correspondent is contacted by telephone: he will be in charge of editing most of the articles. At 12.30pm the make-up of the story that will appear the next day is known: a "general" piece on the subject ("a slap in the face for China, two and a half *feuillets*"), a portrait of the winner, "a box on Charter 08" and, finally, a last item on the issues of liberalization. An interview ("two *feuillets*") is envisaged with a Chinese dissident. (Editorial department, *paid daily,* "World" section, 7 October 2010.)

The same day, the *Rue89.com* website puts a video online presented by one of its journalists. Assuming that the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize will be the Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo, he has written an analysis of around three *feuillets*. Hunched over his laptop listening to the announcement live on the Nobel Academy's website, he listens out for the two words: "Liu Xiaobo" in the Norwegian speech. On hearing them, he sits up and immediately posts the article, already in the site's back office. A little after there are jokes and comments: "In fact, he said in Norwegian 'The Nobel Prize, has not been awarded, contrary to …," "Wait, the bloke hasn't finished talking and it's already online." Some applause. Finally, the author asks for the article's time stamp to be changed "because it's dated 10.50am." (P. Haski, "Liu Xiaobo Nobel Peace Prize winner despite Chinese threats," *Rue89.com* 8 October 2010, consulted on 25 November 2011.)

The incorrect prediction of the "Ballon d'Or" winner

The editorial conference begins at 9.30am. The director of the editorial department gives the floor to a succession of people in section order from the front to the back page. When it is the turn of the "Sports" section: "We'll open with the Ballon d'Or. We'll work on Iniesta [the Spanish footballer]." He announces the composition of the subject. The decision to concentrate on this footballer is agreed at the beginning of the afternoon during an editorial meeting. A front-page headline will be devoted to this news with a photo of the footballer. At around 5.30pm the screen of one of the sports journalists displays an article titled "Iniesta xxxxx." When the front page meeting ends towards 7.00pm the assumption is still being followed. A photo is planned for the front page to greet the award of the Ballon d'Or with the headline "Iniesta, the coronation of an anti-star."

At around 7.55pm it is learnt that in the end the trophy was awarded to Lionel Messi [the Argentinean footballer]. The fact that their expectations were not met arouses barely any emotion other than comments lamenting an unjust sporting decision. A new front-page headline is quickly settled on: "Messi's greatest double." The "Sport" writers go back to the story to adapt it to the new information. The main article begins with these lines, containing a veiled reference: "Lionel Messi's unexpected win. Yesterday, by receiving his second Ballon d'Or, … Barcelona's Argentinean hotshot caught tipsters, who had predicted the trophy would go to … Andres Iniesta, by surprise." (Editorial department, *free daily,* observation of 10 January 2011.)

their organizational properties, both made arrangements in advance of coverage of the event. Anticipation and prediction can however be contradicted by the facts. In this sense, they carry the risk of generating unnecessary work, in the case of this article on the Chinese Nobel Prize if a different winner had been predicted, and as in the case of journalists from the "Sport" section of the *free daily* on the election of the best footballer of the year.

Part of the work done by journalists in the *free daily* during the day is condemned to the trash when the award of the "Ballon d'Or" is announced, but only a part. The structure of the story covering this news has elements that remain unchanged, whatever the identity of the winner: firstly the space devoted to the news and its layout, then some elements are necessarily retained (list of former winners, box on the absence of French players in the annual list, etc.). In particular, because not everything that was previously produced is abandoned the *free daily*'s journalists' error does not cause panic or anxiety. Even better, given that the article on *Rue89.com* is accompanied by a video recounting the conditions under which it was put online indicates that the fact of having written an analytical piece ahead of the announcement of the name of the winner is not something that should remain hidden or silent. Quite the contrary, it provides an opportunity to exhibit the scoop demonstrating the intuition of one of the journalists and the quality of the work of the editorial department in a journalistic space within which competitive strategies are based on immediacy (Cabrolié 2010).

The just-in-time press: Prediction and anticipation as inventory management

Urgency does not so much result in an interruption to the flow as it does in an impromptu change to what it sweeps with it. This raw material is continuously transformed, in such a way that down the line the tempo of production is neither interrupted nor slowed. The solutions for making things everyday enable the highlighting of similarities between journalism and other production sectors. The material constraints to putting together a newspaper can thus be transferred to a category of actors outside of the editorial department, such as the printers, in the same way that certain originators outsource unknown production factors to their subcontractors (Mariotti 2005).

The rationales at work in the press recall those encountered in other productive worlds, in particular in those industries producing "just in time." The link between urgency and just in time has been highlighted in the case of manufacturing industries, in particular the car industry, where unpredictable events (interruptions of supply, assembly line stoppages, etc.) affect the production process. In industrial organizations operating just in time, the problems posed by urgency are mainly resolved by actions relating to three aspects of production (Rot 1998): inventories, the quantity of labour and finally the quality of goods.

Calling on additional labour, by recourse to freelance journalists, is quite common in newspaper companies and sustains debates on the casualization of journalism (Accardo 1998). Not part of the editorial staff, freelancers are not so much used to ease problems born from the challenge of producing in urgent situations as to provide articles that, requiring specialization and expertise, regularly demand

time, establishes a relationship between temporality and their activity (Pilmis 2010) and explains their greater use in the magazine press rather than in the daily press. Freelancers provide articles that correspond to "cold" news, and as such they contribute to the rationalization of the production process. They are needed less because of a need to solicit extra staff during a temporary increase in the quantity of material to produce, but for the effectiveness of their role in the building of inventories on which to draw (long-term reports and investigations, etc.).[28]

Adapting to urgent situations by reducing quality is a common resource of sectors of activity faced with tight time constraints, such as the catering sector (Fine 1992). This argument is at the heart of criticism of journalism inspired by the work of Bourdieu (1996), for whom the brevity of the production cycle, and even more so its shortening in favour of an alignment between the written press and the television model, is the reason for a degradation of information. Some spectacular examples of the diffusion of untrue news stories[29] attest to the risks to journalistic production that urgency poses. This argument is however difficult to use because of the relative doubts regarding the standards used to define the "qualitative" norms of journalistic work. The "quality" of journalistic work is not conceived in the same way depending on whether it stems from the professional norms used by the actors in their practices (Lemieux 2000) and which they may however no longer be able to respect (Accardo 1995), or whether this "quality" is defined outside of the journalistic field. In each case, journalistic production is contemplated only through its results and rarely as a process.

The inherent unpredictability of journalistic raw materials grants a central importance to the activity of anticipation which makes possible prior completion of all or part of the work, and involves inventories that have to be managed. A prime example is prefabrication which, as in the construction sector studied by Drucker (1954) in the 1950s, resolved the problems of uniqueness by establishing forms of serialization. A second example, which is similar to the components set aside in industry to maintain production when there is an assembly line stoppage, brings into play articles that are kept in the "fridge," whose name itself evokes practices that are common in the catering industry. Journalism, however, represents a limited case due to the uniqueness of the goods produced. Unpredictability and urgency are not the result here of interruptions or failures, as in industry, but are the consequence of the properties of what has to be produced.

Much less visible than "hot" news, "cold" news in this perspective has a pivotal role in journalistic activity, for which it operates as an adjustment variable which guarantees reaching a certain level of production, as long as it has not expired. Stockpiling can have a cost, that of overwork, and of work ultimately lost. But this cost is often perceived by the actors to be lower than that of underproduction with

28. Given that this study concentrates specifically on the national press, it is not really possible to specify the role in labour management policies, played by local press correspondents, casual personnel on the edges of professional journalism, who are commonly present within regional press editorial departments (Charon 1993: 109–12).

29. Here we could mention the example of an untrue anti-Semitic attack on the RER D [line D of Paris's regional express rail network] which occurred in 2004 and was extensively covered by *Acrimed*, the media criticism association that is in Bourdieusian tradition ("La fausse agression du RER D: un journalisme de meute?" *Acrimed.org* 6 September 2004, consulted on 1 February 2013).

its association with blank pages or a reduction in the number of pages. The issue of urgency and its resolution enables bridges to be built between different spheres of production and reveals that the manufacture of unique products is not necessarily accompanied by a radical singularity of the production process, but on the contrary a recourse to conventional methods and techniques of prediction making and anticipation. Their significance contribute to making journalism an activity of transforming uncertainty into risk and then of managing this risk, under the constant threat of both non-production and overproduction.

Olivier PILMIS

Centre de Sociologie des Organisations (CSO)
Sciences Po—CNRS
19, rue Amélie
75007 Paris

o.pilmis@cso.cnrs.fr

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