

# Places and means of power

## **Introduction :**

We've studied places and means of power this year in class and illustrated these notions with the example of the press and how people can access informations and news nowadays.

## **Link :**

News sources can definitely be seen as means of power since they are one of the primary ways for people to get informed about what's going on in their own country and all around the world and thus build themselves a political opinion. While news can distort the information to the point of not being really objective nor close to reality and thrusting a given opinion upon readers, it also means that controlling the informations that are handed down to people means having the power of inflecting their point of view. This is why we can qualify the news as a mean of power.

## **Plan:**

Now let's get a closer look at where the informational process takes places and in the way news are released as of today.

### 1. Different news sources on different types of medias

Newspapers are one of the oldest means that still exist for people to get informed. Since printing the informations on paper is quite expensive, only a few journalists can write the articles that are to be published and they have to check their facts, published usually once per day, covering the news from the day before. Though because of newer technologies, newspapers sales are dropping so editors have to find new sources of income, like through advertisement or by charging more.

With the apparition of the radio and then the television came new ways of informing people. The information is still delivered by a small number of professional journalists who carefully checked the correctness of these informations, but it's delivered a bit more in real time, special reports can be brought up at any moment, even though usually, an information bulletin is delivered during the news, usually more than once a day. However since these news are broadcasting live, subjects that are mentioned are preselected and are announced processed, in digests. Thus one cannot select what news is relevant or more important to learn about. We've studied in class that a journalist was expressing her discontent regarding what type of information is selected to be handed down to the masses. She believes that most of that information is neither relevant nor interesting to most people.

The newest mean of information is definitely the Internet. So the Internet does bring a new aspect of how people relate to the news since it comes with interactivity: people can react to the information they read and give their own opinion about it. So we find many different information sources on the Internet, that are not all good to be trusted. However the major newspapers and TV channels all have their own website where they publish news as well, updated in real time with increased interactivity: they are indeed trying to keep up and give themselves a presence on the Internet as well. Though the

professional publishers of news on the Internet face the issue of getting an income in a world where informations can be accessed for free on many other websites, which brings the same solutions, that are either getting fees from advertisement or charging readers. We have studied in class different types of websites, all with their particularities. Aside the websites from news corporations or TV channels, other websites such as the Huffington Post let many people write and publish their articles, given that it matches certain standards that are checked by moderators. We've also studied another type of website, such as Scoop, that provides only bare information, with no processing nor subjectivity. Scoop only provides raw information, not a journalist's opinion on the topic.

## 2. What guarantees comes with what type of media?

When the news were essentially handed down to people via newspapers, it was easy for governments to control and censor the content of the news that were printed out, since only a few people could write in newspapers and couldn't do it anonymously. Even though that was true for national newspapers, it was also possible for dissidents to print out independent and illegal newspapers when they were not allowed to, for instance as Combat in France during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Though it was really hard for such newspapers to reach a lot of people since their distribution was clandestine. The situation was improved a little with the radio: even though the national radios could be controlled just as well as newspapers, it was easier for dissidents to broadcast too and that way, they could reach more people and more easily than with the distribution of newspapers. This was as well used during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War to organize the resistance. Later came the Television, where news are still processed by a small number of people. Since broadcasting for Television is quite expensive, there aren't so many channels and dissidents can't really use television to express their opinion. It is thus quite easy to control in a dictatorship. Now the Internet brings a real revolution there, since it lets anyone express his opinion equally as anyone else. The fundamental architecture of the Internet involves that there is no central point where all the information goes by, but is rather made of interconnections between people's computers directly. That way, anyone can express his own opinions from his own Internet connection, thus leaving very little room for censorship. However as big media conglomerates and service providers are taking over the Internet, it tends to become more and more centralized on platforms such as Google or Facebook that people use to express their opinions, that become key points that are easy to control. Quoting Loyd Kauffman, president of the Independent Film and Television Alliances: « And what does this lead to? Our virtual renaissance, becomes a virtual prison of spoon-fed baby food information ».

### **Conclusion:**

New technologies brought more and more ways for people to get informed, however only a small number of them actually lets people access unprocessed and raw news. Moreover, most of the traditional means of information don't let people express their opinions, which is a major flaw when it comes to dealing with a dictatorship. Nevertheless, the Internet brings all sorts of news types from many different sources, so one can find out the truth and build an accurate opinion on a topic that can also be expressed independently on the Internet: it is thus one major advantage for free speech.