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Public service information. The project.

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This study deals with the public service information offer in Brittany using electronic media.

This particular piece of information had several characteristics:

- **it is not necessarily due to an investigative process about what could be hidden (unlike the conception inspired by the usefulness of the "fourth estate" in democracy);**
- **it is not produced only by professional journalists;**
- **the main organised forces in the society are not only the people addressed but also the sources and the mediators (implying a circular and not linear scheme);**
- **it coexists and adds further to the other kind of information;**

° it can be conveyed by non-market media, especially the free ones; it is on any support, but mainly under electronic forms and the media.

This information is increasingly offered by the public authorities and in particular by city councils.

Significance for theoretical research.

This research could enable to overcome the traditional division between information and communication which proceeds from an historical separation between journalism and advertising (or between critical thinking and propaganda). This segmentation of the social and professional activities within what is rather vaguely called information-communication (the terminological inaccuracy indicating the ambiguity of a not very conceived and often poorly managed coexistence) is found in the scientific field where a difficulty to conceptualise the production relationships between journalism and communication in other terms than confrontation and concurrence is observed.

The development of the media activities has made rise a number of practices which cannot be placed either in one pole or the other but at the very junction of both; sometimes in a frank cooperation, often also in a opacity which could be in particular due to the lack of social and professional legitimacy of these hybrid uses.

The program consequently pretends to make evolve the conceptualization of these relationships of information production and circulation, which imply in a circular scheme the media, sources and audiences. It also falls within the perspective of an overall reflection process about the mechanisms of historical construction of the practices of media information by comparison between social and discursive universes which come from a continuous motion of dispersion from the journalistic uses to several areas of communication.

Significance for applied research.

The program plans to observe the offer of this public service information proposed by the city councils, to meet the main actors and to provide them with a summary of the research findings.

This exchange would further the cross knowledge of the uses and enrich mutually the methods, tools and products.

Significance for tools developments.

The program aims to produce:

- a typology of the online information products offered by city councils;
- a characterisation of the methods of production;
- an analysis of the strategies of the actors.

This triple approach would enable to model this public service information by determining its distinctive characteristics, both from the viewpoint of the support and the media offer.

Project organisation.

The project consists of two inquiry stages:

1. for a period of two months, an analyst will observe the information offer of fifteen medium city councils in Brittany, (s)he will study in particular the content organisation, its update, its objective, interactivity areas with audiences, its sources and partners. This stage will be coordinated by Denis Ruellan (from CRAPE/ONTICM)
1. for a period of two weeks, an analyst will visit five production sites picked up from the city councils studied beforehand, (s)he will study the work methodology (staff, premises, means, processes, relationships) and will collect the views of the people in charge (projects, identifications). This stage will be coordinated by Bertrand Cabedoche (from IRUTIC).

An additional month is planned for the analysis and the synthesis of the study.

Bibliography, state of the art.

Numerous researches deal with the communication practices of the public authorities. Fewer refer to online practices. These studies have been undertaken within the framework of the information and communication sciences on the one hand and of the political science on the other hand. More generally, these studies have taken up a nominative and deterministic viewpoint postulating an anaesthetization of the information uses with propaganda and influence aims.