Title

"A STUDY CASE OF NEWSPAPERS TO INFER THE NOTION
OF TECCHNOLOGY TODAY.
A recovery of the context for analyzing the socio-technical process of co-construction"

Research plan[1]:

The objective is to analyze[2] various newspapers[3] in order to get as close as possible to a definition of what is now meant by technology, reflecting from the social construction of technology and some of the most important of semiotics around key concepts such as reading, reader, medium, messages, and context. Thus, the purpose is to see how from the performance, the design and context of media, such notions can be inferred, recovering the socio-technical content production and its relationship with a specifical context.

We said that all communication technology introduces changes in the modes of reading and interpreting the messages. However, an important question to think about the current processes of reading is: what has changed? And if there are changes, what has changed and how? What characteristics do they have? We cannot identify the source of change in a metaphysical sense of the term to identify changes, but we can work with the notion of *entstehung o herkunft* from (Nietzsche). In others words, given current conditions, the socio-technical conditions of technology also become something that must be analyzed within the contextual variables: historical moment of its appearance, socio-geographical distribution, its place in the national media map, and how to be up to in relation to the quantity and the characteristics of the receivers (audiences? users? public?) of the message, and so on.

We agree with Witschge when she said that "not all tools for participation are equally meaningful and that the demotic turn in news journalism does not merely lie in the technological innovations, but it is also informed by the social, cultural, political and economic context of news media". And we could also say that even more in a specific historical context of each place. In this sense, we can see that there is a socio-technical relation that links the process of content production, with the particular functions of each newspaper, and its readers (Bijker-Pinch, 1987; Oudshoorn-Pinch, 2005; Boczkowski; 2006). Newspapers, whether on paper or in digital form, have always been produced and modified in their formats by different technological innovations (Boczkowski; 2006), but also constructed from cultural, social, economic and political factors. There are processes of co-construction between existing social and technological aspects in all media. Newspapers, as we know them today, come in modernity, setting the modern notions of reader, participation and democracy. These interrelated ideas, give us clues to infer a notion of technology and its relationship with the notions of media[4] and message, to observe what happens *to/with* the message.

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[1] These ideas are proposed in order to discuss later in a skype interview with the director of the project and reformulated if it is necessary.

[2] I think that once I am there we can choose what newspapers in traditional and digital formats we can analyse, if only in the Netherlands or comparing newspapers from different countries.

[3] We must clarify that "newspaper" is not the same as "press". Newspapers can be identified as specific mass media with distinctive editorial lines, and political functions; but also as commercial companies. The press instead, can be considered as a historical, political and cultural actor with special characteristics in each region; conformed by several mass media, crossed by economic and technological factors, and located in a particular context.

How to analyze technology today considering the complexity of the aspects – social, technological, political-, that it involves? How is the influence of the specific characteristics of the context in the decision of what technological tools used by each media? What are some of the characteristics of the process that are co-constructed between newspapers and the socio-technical issues? What kind of technology are they creating now? What relationships appear with the context? The comparison between traditional and digital newspapers, paper and bits, would allow us to see what the most relevant criteria are in each one and recover the significance of the context and the external dimensions in the analyses of technology.

We agree with Coleman & Ross (2010: 154), when they say that "a great underlying paradox exists in the changing relationship between journalism and its publics, however: The public seems to have ever-greater access to the media; more opportunities to produce its own media content, or even their own media; comment on and challenge mainstream news; and seek alternative platforms of public information. At the same time, the public's discontent with (news) media and its 'elite' sources is as widespread as ever, if not continually growing". Faced with this we may ask : Do readers really have a possibility to interact and change the situation? Do they really have opportunities to create their own contents? Do they know the veracity of the sources and the possibility to question them? The reader is a political subject, and is also a subject of knowledge. He builds his view of the world through reading, newspapers, books or surfing the different places on the web. The technology of writing was, and still is nowadays, one of the technologies that allowed the reader to interact, to intercommunicate with other readers and also with the newspaper. Writing and reading continue being the most important technologies in relation with readers and with the function of the media.

So, what does digital technology nowadays allow? And, how does it work? Are there iconic characteristics of newspapers and the interaction spaces? Is there a bond formed between different kinds of images, audio-visual and photographs? Is the language a distinctive element and identifier of a specific context in which it is the medium? Are the effects (expected? undesirable? unforeseen?) generated through the reading of the contents published there and the subsequent interconnections among users? Are the interactions that take place off screen there? Or is just the information published there? It is important to rethink the importance of factors that are not so notorious once triggered the introduction of technology in society and which function as variables of a given set of relations (modes of reading, the texts, symbolic organization, social structure, etc.) that give rise to epistemological configurations and formalized systems (Foucault, 1970:23).

These epistemological levels have been produced, socially constructed and shaped the development and the introduction of various technologies (Bijker, Pinch 1987) in the society. They also contain a meaning of subject, of knowledge, a perspective of the world. The co-existence of both newspapers are part of a bigger device (Foucault, 1991) that allow us to read content –digitally or in paper-, but, apart from that, it is also the product of relations of technological development, economic, political, social and cultural aspects. Considering that technology is used according to different objectives, we can approximate to a notion of technology analysing the processes of co-construction that take place between the specific context and socio-technical aspects.

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[4] By "media", we are going to understand a special type of mass communication media, with their specific characteristics and their own logics of working.

Which are the technological differences between both formats? Which are the underlying epistemological criteria? Taking a study case of newspapers, the objective will be to approach and develop some ideas of it.

<u>Objectives:</u>
General
1- Analysed the specifically aspects of the interfaces of the newspapers –digital and paper- to infer a notion of technology.

Specifics
1- Compare only the design features of traditional newspapers and journals line that allow us to infer the notion of technology.
2- Recognize the social and technical characteristics that they have.
3- Analyse the characteristics of social-technical of each support in order to see co-construction processes between the function of newspapers and the specific context.

Activities and methodology:

The methodology used is qualitative-interpretative, and its main focus is on the social construction of technology and in the semiotics, to complement the approach of the research.

The social construction of technology will allow us to understand and analyze the characteristics of "co-construction" technological process: the uses that take place between users and technology changes, the modes in which the messages are produced, how the contextual factors take place into the newspapers. But most of all divide the object into different analytical levels. Each support have a specific mode of technology. The concepts of semiotics are the correct notions to look into visual, scriptural and iconographic aspects of the interfaces, through which we perceive the content published in every newspapers.

The listing, description and analysis of the elements of the interfaces will give us the "junction points" to think the vision that prevails in the current technological developments to design the scriptural strategies, ways of perceiving and read it, and the specific elements of the context.

More specific activities to develop, will be decided with the project coordinator.

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[5] The bibliography proposed is the one that is available here, but the idea is to add more new bibliography once I start to work in the project.

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