

Automated news production within the **uses** and **professional practices**

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Formation of the uses

Complex mechanism relying on both
collective and individual representations
+ sociocultural and professional
background of the journalist

Endogenous factors:

organizational context and journalistic routines

Exogenous factors:

technical imaginary / man-machine relationship

Hypothesis

Uses and practices are the results of interactions between the technical and the social, in which journalistic values are embed.

= **compatibility**

Uses are conditioned by the needs and requirements of the users (can be expressed explicitly or not)

= **quality management (ISO 9000)**

Uses will depend on the representations of the technical object.

= **imaginary**

Method: SCOT model/software lifecycle

- 2 case studies (2 Belgian newsrooms)
- Participant observation
- Involved within the design process :
privileged access to information
- Interviews + anonymous surveys
(qualitative)
- Assessments methods (quantitative)



Case study: “Air quality”

- Small newsroom
- 6 journalists involved
- Niche media, about social innovation (monthly magazine)
- Support investigative (1 year project)
- Air quality in Brussels (real time open data)
- Data aggregation, analysis (graphs, maps), natural language generation => online access

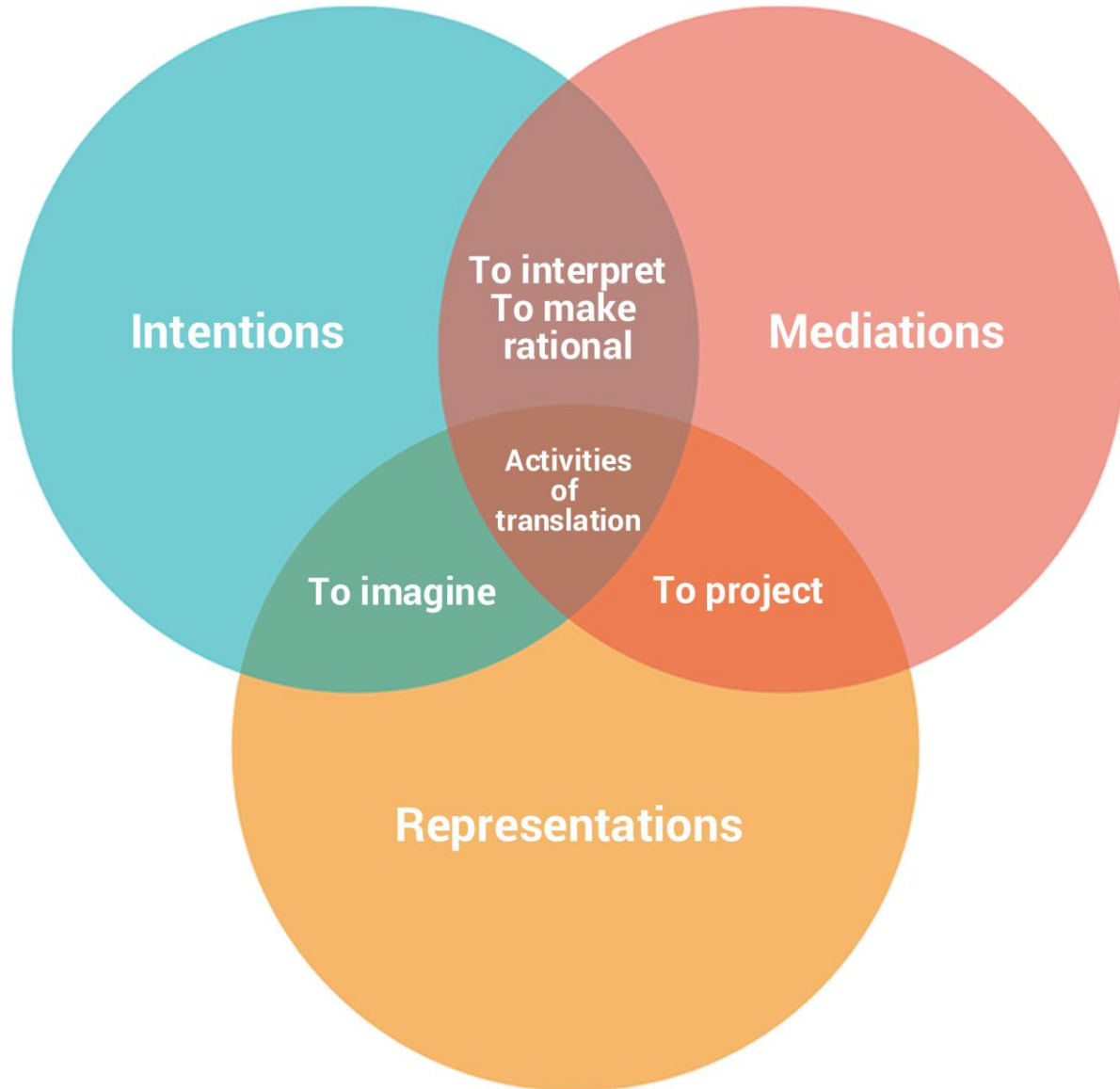
Case study: “Stock markets”

- Bigger newsroom (50 journalists)
- 6 journalists involved
- Daily newspaper + Online “market live”
- Support daily routines
(1 year development)
- Coverage: stock market
(paid real time data)
- Natural language generation, graphs
=> offline access (only for journalist)

Journalists, actors of the innovation

- Considered as a first form of use (Akrich)
- Meet ISO 9000 principles (quality management)
- Journalists define their requirements and needs (translation process)
- Interactions with the information system through human mediator(s)
- Gives the innovation more chance to be used BUT does not guarantee it!

Translation circles



Importance of mediation practices

Software at the **boundary** between two social worlds (Flichy)

Mediator

= process manager, boundary agent

= translator or facilitator

Tasks: mobilize staffs

Respect of the deadlines, check-point to ensure that technology answers to journalism

Technological imaginary (collective/individual)

Resistance = negative representations

Technology = time-consuming / not journalism

Data = resistance to numbers (“I am afraid”)

Automation = “the robot will take my job”
(competitor)

Engagement = positive representations

Automated news to support repetitive and
time-consuming tasks

Main observations

Technology not purely mechanical

= social construct

Limits have to be fixed by journalists

= choices embed journalistic values, permits to open the “black box” of technology

Appropriation

= meet journalistic requirements

= give meaning to automation (journalists)

Imaginary

= can evolve with time (perceived benefits)

Conclusion

- Journalists = actors of the innovation but will not guarantee the uses
- Imaginary not frozen once and for all
= can lead to reconsider uses & practices
= correlates to innovation theory (Rogers)
(relative advantages: time-consuming & repetitive tasks; compatibility: with journalistic values induced by the association within the design process; benefits: gain of time + easy to use)

Conclusion

- Non-use also because no interest in the field or because resistances (to news automation, to technologies, to numbers)
- Can lead to reconsider practices, especially to more data driven approach (source): new interest for numbers and spreadsheets (independent of automation)
- **Automation comes to live when it is appropriated by journalists in their work**