



**Enhancing the efficiency of alerting systems through personalized,  
culturally sensitive multi-channel communication**

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**Deliverable D4.3.**

**News reporting when crises or catastrophes occur**

**An overview of relevant editorial processes**

**in French and Swedish mass media**

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### **News reporting when crises or catastrophes occur**

**An overview of relevant editorial processes  
in French and Swedish mass media**

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## CONTENTS

	<b>PAGE:</b>
1. Introduction	4
2. News media structure in France and Sweden	4
2.1. The French news media landscape	5
2.1.1. Print, radio and television	5
2.1.2. Online and digital media	6
2.1.3. Media legislation, accountability systems and regulatory authorities	7
2.1.4. Development trends	7
2.2. The Swedish news media landscape	8
2.2.1. Print, radio and television	8
2.2.2. Online and digital media	9
2.2.3. Media legislation, accountability systems and regulatory authorities	10
2.2.4. Development trends	10
2.3. Some comparable statistical figures	11
2.4. Different media systems	11
3. Media logic	12
3.1. Newsroom organization	13
3.1.1. Outside the newsroom: Political regulations and economical factors	14
3.1.2. Inside the newsroom: Routines, formats and the role of the reporter	15
3.2. News evaluation and selection	17
4. Organizations of news work when crises occur	20
4.1. The acute phase	20
4.2. Different from usual	21
4.3. After the first phase	22
4.4. The sources	22
4.5. The role of the media when crises occur	23
5. Two Swedish examples	24
5.1. Waiting for the snowstorm, January 2007	24
5.2. When the tsunami hit Thailand on 25 December 2004	25
6. Conclusions	28
7. References	31

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this report is to provide a general overview of how alerts become news. The report is based on a comparison of data from France and Sweden, two European countries with partly different media structures, media use and media traditions.

The main questions addressed in the report are:

Q1: What is newsworthiness, and how do media select news events?

Q2: How do news media organize their work when catastrophes and crises occur?

Q3: Are there any differences between how French and Swedish media organize their work and report on crises?

The report focuses on national newspapers, television, radio and online media in both countries. It is mainly based on previous research and reports, but also to some extent builds on interviews with editorial staff from three large national news media in France and in Sweden. Guy Panaget at Thales Services SAS has conducted the interviews with French editors and media representatives. The author of the report has conducted the Swedish interviews.

All news work is carried out in accordance with professional routines and procedures. An insight into how ordinary news work is conducted, and why, may therefore provide a better understanding of how the newsroom works in cases of big and exceptional news events, such as crises and catastrophes. In order to place the news media in a social and market context, the following presentation starts with an overview of the French and Swedish media landscapes. It then continues with an introduction to the concept of media logic.

The report then moves on to describe how newsrooms in France and Sweden organize and evaluate news reporting when crisis occur. Finally, the report concludes with two Swedish examples of reporting crises and catastrophes. The first is a case study of how national television prepared for an oncoming storm, the second is a summary of how some large news media reacted to and organized their reporting of the tsunami flood waves in Thailand in 2004, when more than 250 000 people died, of which 500 were Swedish tourists.

## **2. NEWS MEDIA STRUCTURE IN FRANCE AND SWEDEN**

In the presentation below information of the news media structure in each of the two countries is presented. Identical statistical data from France and Sweden is very difficult to find, and consequently the presentation is not completely symmetrical. However, it gives an overall picture of where the media structures of the two countries differ, and where there are obvious similarities.

## 2.1. The French news media landscape<sup>1</sup>

The present media landscape in France has its cultural roots in the post-war period, when the state decided to regulate an industry that lost credit after the collaborationist Vichy regime. The state is hence still very present in the written press (via a recently renewed system of subsidies), the TV (with France Televisions as a major actor and its president almost directly appointed by the state), the radio (the Radio France group has two stations in the top five in terms of audience), and more recently on the Internet (with regulations on cultural products, downloading and property rights known as Hadopi).

### 2.1.1. *Print, radio and television*

The national daily press is still a very important symbol in France; this despite relatively low circulation numbers compared with other European newspapers of record.

The *daily newspapers* in France may be divided into three main segments (Epiq, 2010):

- The national daily press with 11 paid-for newspapers with a circulation totalling 1.6 million copies, and reaching 17.2 million readers a day.
- The regional and local daily press with 47 newspapers making 5.1 million copies, and 8.3 million daily readers.
- The urban freesheets with 2.7 million copies and 4.3 million readers a day.

Due to falling circulation and revenues, the newspaper industry and the government in the autumn of 2008 organized an extraordinary conference. As a result, the state decided to invest 600 million euro in the written press over the next three years in order to support it. This was not without raising questions about the independence of such state-subsidized papers.

*Radio* has long been a very popular medium in France, with more than 1,200 stations. In 1982 a law was passed that ended the state monopoly. Every weekday, 42 million people listen to radio; the generalists' channels being the most popular ones (RTL, France Inter).

Public service channels still hold a particular place in the radio landscape. Radio France owns five major stations, including France Inter, second in terms of audience with 5.4 million listeners (in July, 2009). RFI, the 'French voice abroad' is second and the Third World channel, whose audience resides in African countries, is third. Also, private channels have high audience ratings, including the historical 'foreign' channels. Since the law long forbade private stations, some transmitted from just the other side of the country's borders, such as the leading radio station RTL, or Radio Tele Luxembourg.

The French *television* landscape was remarkably stable over a period of 20 years, but since 2005 it has been changing substantially, due to technology improvements and new regulations. One can distinguish three major changes. First, the number of accessible free TV-channels has multiplied. From 1986 to 2000, there were six major actors on this field – two private operators, three public service stations and one encrypted network – and two satellite dish operators. The success of the TNT (transmission service for digital terrestrial TV, founded in 2005) is a particular challenge to the major channels. For instance, TF1, the leading private channel, has seen its audience slip away regularly since 2005. It is now far from its 30 per cent market share domination. Twelve new and very dynamic national channels have been freely accessible since 2005, and a few others locally.

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<sup>1</sup> This part of the report is mainly, but not exclusively, based on the article by Martin Pasquier and Bernard Lamizet from The European Journalist Center, last updated on 5 November 2010. [www.ejc.net/media\\_landscape/](http://www.ejc.net/media_landscape/), retrieved 11/06/11.

Another notable change in the TV landscape is President Sarkozy's decision to ban progressive advertising on public service channels. Complete application of this decision was implemented during 2011. No clear solution was set up to replace advertising revenues. However, initial audience polls show that viewers appreciate less advertising.

The third change in the French television landscape – which still is not as important as expected – is related with the Internet. The web allows people to watch a lot of programs via streaming, and the big channels now all offer a reliable and paid-for system of video on demand (VOD). Mobile phone television though, despite the promises of Internet and telephone operators, is still lagging due to unreliable technology and unconvincing content package.

The national French *news agency*, Agence France Presse (AFP) was founded in 1944. It is ruled by civil law but is not a private company. However, in October 2008 the French government began a series of consultations that pave the way to a privatization of AFP. The agency has 2,200 fulltime employees who work in 165 countries, in six languages.

### **2.1.2. Online and digital media**

Almost every newspaper has an online edition. Some of them are heavyweights on the French web, such as *lequipe.fr* (sports daily), with 48.5 million visits in December 2008, and French daily *lemonde.fr* with over 40 million visits. The economic model of the online press has still to be defined. The present trend among French newspapers is to forgo all-for-free web editions and charge for some content. However, French media workers have not yet quite adopted to the new logic of the Internet. Until recently, most online newspapers publish merely copied and pasted content from their print edition, without any major editorial innovation. Citizen journalism and blogging are still seen by journalists as purely amateur practices without value to the production of information.

Accessing the Internet on mobile phones is becoming more and more popular. Eighty-two out of 100 people have a mobile phone subscription in France. Of these, 31 per cent use mobile Internet (8.3 million people), with a fast expansion among people aged 25 to 50, and among men. The main newspapers all have versions of their online editions that are compatible with mobile phones. Recently, the radio channels can also be received in good quality on mobile phones equipped with 3G connections. Television on mobile phones is still a marketing promise, not a reality. However, TV channels all now have a 'replay' service on the Internet, allowing for free viewing of broadcasted material for seven days.

Furthermore, a new category of media is emerging on the Internet: citizen journalism. Sites such as *LePost* (part of *Le Monde*), *AgoraVox* (owned by a monitoring company) or *Rue89* (created by journalists) offer Internet users a chance to produce news. *LePost*, seen as a 'test tube' by *Le Monde*, had 1.5 million unique visitors in 2008.

Blogs are also very popular in France. An estimated 10 million blogs, of which 2.5 million are active, make France the country with the most blogs per inhabitant. These figures do, however, not include a particularity of the French blogosphere, the *Skyblogs*, hosted by the website of *Skyrock* radio station. There, more than 27 million blogs are registered, mainly teenagers' daily pages created to be seen by peers, most of them classmates.

Other social networks are also quite popular in France, with an estimated 4 million users on Facebook as of December 2008. *Copains d'Avant*, a site for finding old friends, has 45 per cent of French Internet users registered for an account. There are 125,000 Twitter users in France, mainly media professionals.

### **2.1.3. Media legislation, accountability systems and regulatory authorities**

An important law about the freedom of the press was passed in 1881. A century later, in 1982, a new law opened the audiovisual field to private operators. A great number of regulations protect freedom of expression for all kinds of media in France.

In 1918 a code of conduct was adopted by the SNJ, the national union for journalists. Since 1990, the chairmen of newspapers and audiovisual companies have prepared and imposed new codes on their journalists mostly to avoid legal proceedings, and sometimes for ethical considerations. Otherwise, a law of 1935 protects the independence of journalists, particularly the so-called *clause de conscience*, which enables a journalist to leave a newspaper whose owner or editorial profile has changed.

The *Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel* (CSA) allocates licences and frequencies. This regulation board was created in 1989. It issues emission authorizations and distributes Hertzian frequencies. However, its independence is questioned: it is funded by the state and the president of France appoints a third of its nine members. The president of the Assembly appoints the second third, and the president of the Senate the last third.

As regards the Internet, a new independent public authority was created in 2007, the Hadopi (*Haute Autorité pour la Diffusion des Œuvres et la Protection des droits sur Internet*) that aims to regulate property right on the web. The scope of this authority was intensely debated in Parliament during 2009, the main controversy concerning its possibility to cut off the Internet access of an intruder. This right supposes a permanent watch of the network.

### **2.1.4. Development trends**

The future trends and challenges on the French news media landscape will most probably have to do with developments of new media technologies and equipment. Over the last decade the print newspapers have been trying to conquer the competition from online and digital media, without much success. At the same time the previous stable TV landscape has been shaken by the arrival of 14 new and very active channels.

The return of the state in the French media sphere (if it ever left) is also impressive. In the last two years, the printed press (with the 600 million euro subsidy package), TV (with the end of advertising on public channels), the radio (with controversial nominations) and the Internet (with the law promoting the distribution of creative works and the protection of rights on the internet) are all under tight supervision of the executive.

New technologies are 'changing the world' as French journalist and top blogger François Pisani claims. Among other things, they necessitate a redefining of the almost holy status of journalists in France. When an increasing number of ordinary people on a regular basis write blogs and use free online media for information, the role of the journalist, and of traditional media, is facing radical changes. The near future awaits the expansion of mobile phone devices and media applications still reserved for a geeky elite of early adapters.

## 2.2. The Swedish news media landscape<sup>2</sup>

Mass media in Sweden has by tradition a strong and central position in society. Two government investigations (1974 and 1994) have stated the tasks of the press to be to inform, to scrutinize and to provide a forum for debate. Public service media are assigned similar tasks. The state has had a substantial influence on the media landscape, but this has gone side by side with a strong tradition of freedom of expression. Sweden got its first Freedom of Information Act in 1766, already then protecting media from censorship and guaranteeing public access to documents held by government authorities and bureaus (Hadenius, et al., 2008).

### 2.2.1. *Print, radio and television*

Five main features characterize the Swedish newspaper market. First, newspapers are based locally or regionally; only two tabloid newspapers, one business paper and one free daily can be regarded as having a national readership. Second, almost 100 per cent of the traditional morning newspapers are sold by subscription, with early morning home delivery. Third, almost all social groups read newspapers. A fourth point is the state press subsidy system, which today plays a minor role for the newspaper structure in general. A final feature is the strong presence of free dailies.

The Swedish print newspaper market may be divided into four main segments:

- The metropolitan morning papers; these are quality papers published seven days a week. The group represents 23 per cent of total newspaper circulation.
- The metropolitan single copy sale papers: two tabloid dailies (one of them with three different editions) that represent 15 per cent of total newspaper circulation.
- The regional and local papers: all other papers published at least three times a week and sold almost exclusively on subscription. They represent 37 per cent of total newspaper circulation.
- The freesheets: they represent 20 per cent of the total circulation.

The Swedish newspaper market has been relatively stable over the past three decades compared with many other countries. However, since the mid-1980s there has been a circulation decline for paid papers. This has to a large extent been compensated for by the expansion of free dailies. State subsidies have been given to economically weak newspapers since the early 1970s. Around 80 daily papers currently receive an operational subsidy. Almost all papers have launched Internet versions; especially developing so called user-generated content.

*Radio* in Sweden was established in 1925 as a private company, owned, among others, by the newspaper industry. Strong public control granted a broadcasting monopoly. Advertising was banned from radio from the start. In 1993 private local radio was introduced on commercial basis. In the radio market the public service company Sveriges Radio (Swedish Radio) is the dominant actor. It has close to 60 per cent of the radio audience market. It offers three national channels.

The private radio consists only of local stations, 89 total in 2008. Since the introduction of commercial radio, four Swedish networks with national ambitions developed, but later merged into two: MTG Radio and SBS Radio. MTG Radio has 46 stations and SBS Radio has 40 stations.

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<sup>2</sup> This part of the report is mainly, but not exclusively, based on the article by Lennart Weibull, Anna-Maria Jönsson and Ingela Wadbring from The European Journalist Center, last updated on 16 February 2011. [www.ejc.net/media\\_landscape/](http://www.ejc.net/media_landscape/), retrieved 11/06/11.



Swedish *television* started in 1957 as a public service monopoly. In 1969 a second channel was added including so-called windows with regional news. Public service television is organized by Sveriges Television (SVT: Swedish Television). It has traditionally been the main actor in the television area. It broadcasts in three channels. The market share for the two largest ones was in 2008 about 30 per cent. Public service radio and television are only financed by license fees.

Privately owned television channels financed by advertising were introduced in Sweden in the second half of the 1980s. Since cable penetration was high it offered a market for satellite channels transmitted from abroad. After the decision in 1991 to permit a Swedish terrestrial TV channel based on advertising TV4 was given a licence (20 per cent of TV market in 2008). In 2007 digital terrestrial television was fully introduced, making Sweden one of the pioneers of the new technology.

Sweden has one national *news agency*, Tidningarnas Telegrambyrå (TT), founded in 1921. During the last decade TT has developed its services and introduced new areas. It offers readymade newspaper pages, including features about travel, health and motor. It also produces news for radio, television, Internet and mobile devices.

### **2.2.2. Online and digital media**

The main areas of Internet use are e-mail (66 per cent at least once a week in 2008), information seeking (62), news (50), banking (29), video clips (23) and chatting (22). The number reading blogs is lower (17 per cent) but is clearly increasing.

In the early 21st century almost all Swedish newspapers have digital versions, trying to find a format completing the print version, e.g. news updates or special services. The most popular online medium by far is Aftonbladet.se founded by the tabloid newspaper with the same name in 1995 with almost 4.2 million unique visitors per week and a national reach of 35 per cent. The daily visitors of the online versions of the five big metropolitan morning papers amount to 3 million. In most regions local papers are the dominating online service of local news.

In terms of readership competition it is evident that the single-copy print newspapers gradually have been replaced by the 'Net versions'. In 2008 the two leading single-copy papers had significantly more online than print readers, the only exception being among Swedes aged 65 and older. In October 2011 *Aftonbladet* declared its online edition to be the principal one. Thus, the online reading has compensated the decline in print circulation. For subscribed-to morning papers the situation is different. Altogether, the print versions are still dominating, but there is a gradual increase in online reading, which is higher than the decline in print circulation. Further, morning papers have developed news services for mobile phone reception, but so far the subscription rate is low (2 per cent daily use in 2008).

Sveriges Radio began podcasting in 2005. Today there are almost 1,000 channels available. The use of them is relatively low but growing.

The reach of the two main television websites, SVT.se and TV4.se, is significantly lower than that of the national papers. However, the use of web television has increased significantly and doubled in a year's time. In the last quarter of 2008 almost 4 million Swedes watched television on the Internet. However, the dominating source of web television is still YouTube.

The use of mobile phones and smartphones for more than conversation is rapidly growing. In particular, young people use their mobile phones for accessing the Internet (30 per cent), reading news (30 per cent) and, foremost, participating in social media (38 per cent) (Westlund 2011).

### ***2.2.3. Media legislation, accountability systems and regulatory authorities***

Swedish media legislation is based on the Freedom of Expression Act. Additional laws, e.g. the Radio and Television Act, regulate details and organizational and technical conditions. The Internet is generally treated like the press, meaning there are legal freedoms to establish sites and no restriction on contents.

The Swedish accountability system has a long tradition. The Publicists' Club (PK), an organization of people working in the newspaper trade, later also other media, including editors, journalists and writers, decided the first rules in 1900. They concerned fairness in publishing. Gradually the rules were extended, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, when a Press Ombudsman (PO) was established by the press organizations. In 1968 the Association of Swedish Journalists (SJF) decided on a professional code of conduct. The Press Council was established in 1916, originally as a 'Court of Honour' for editors and journalists.

Today three sets of rules form the basis of the media accountability system in Sweden: The publicity rules (the rules of good journalistic practice), the rules of professional journalism, and the guidelines of editorial advertising. All the rules are voluntary, initiated by independent organizations, in order to prevent legislation. The Press Council and the Press Ombudsman supervise the rules of good journalistic practice, which are regarded as the most central. A special committee appointed by the board of the trade union, SJF, supervises the rules of professional journalism. In the area of radio and television media accountability is a responsibility of the government organization The Swedish Broadcasting Commission.

Swedish media policy is a matter of government and is handled by the ministry of culture. The Press Subsidies Council, that is the governmental organization tasked with safeguarding the diversity of the daily newspaper market, controls the press subsidy system. In the area of radio and television there are two main agencies. The Swedish Radio and TV Authority that grants licences for radio, TV and Internet, and that gives information and monitors developments in the media field, and The Broadcasting Commission that does the formal supervision of all radio and television programmes, with the exception of satellite channels from abroad.

The main principles of media legislation and ethical principles are applied also to Internet publications if they have a formally appointed responsible editor.

### ***2.2.4. Development trends***

A general tendency is that the public, especially young people, want to pay less for news and information, preferring media that are free of charge. The Internet will continue to expand as a media arena and traditional media are expected to further develop their already strong presence on the 'Net'. The importance of the Internet as a distribution channel for news is consequently gradually expected to increase. However, media based only on Internet publication are few.

The main problem for public service radio and TV is that they are losing the young public to the commercial channels, a tendency that is reinforced by digitalisation as the satellite channels become available to a larger audience. The development of the radio and television audience is a good illustration of the fragmentation of the Swedish media system of the early 21st century. All existing channels lose audience when new channels are introduced. Audience fragmentation in Sweden has meant strong age segregation, where the elderly prefer traditional newspapers and public service, and the youth prefer new commercial media, including the free dailies. The development is reinforced by the ongoing expansion of online services and digital media.

## 2.2.5. Some comparable statistical figures

<b>Population</b>	<b>France</b>	<b>Sweden</b>
Population, number of inhabitants, 2011 <sup>1</sup>	65 027 000	9 428 000
Adult population, number of inhabitants, 2008, <sup>2</sup>	49 957 000	7 640 000
<b>Newspapers</b>		
Number of paid-for daily newspapers, 2008 <sup>2</sup>	85	84
Number of paid-for national dailies, 2008 <sup>2</sup>	24	4
Number of paid-for local and regional dailies, 2008 <sup>2</sup>	61	80
Total average circulation for paid-for dailies, 2008, thousand copies <sup>2</sup>	7 600	3 334
Daily newspaper reach, 2008, per cent <sup>2</sup>	44	83
<b>Radio</b>		
Number of radio channels and stations, 2005 <sup>2</sup>	56	32
Radio listening in public service radio, 2006, per cent <sup>2</sup>	20	63
Radio listening in private radio, 2006, per cent <sup>2</sup>	55	22
<b>Television</b>		
Households with TV technologies, per cent <sup>2</sup>	98	100
Number of public nationwide TV channels, 2008 <sup>2</sup>	8	7
Number of private nationwide TV channels, 2008 <sup>2</sup>	155	50
TV viewing per individual, 2009, minutes per day <sup>2</sup>	202	163
Individuals watching TV-news daily, 2006, per cent <sup>5</sup>	65	72
<b>Internet, cell phones</b>		
Households with access to computer at home, 2008, per cent <sup>2</sup>	68.4	87.1
Households with Internet access at home, 2010, per cent <sup>3</sup>	74	88
Population covered by mobile cellular network, 2007, per cent <sup>2</sup>	99	98
Individuals frequently using Internet, 16–74 years, 2010, per cent <sup>3</sup>	62	76
Individuals frequently using Internet, 16–24 years, 2010, per cent <sup>3</sup>	83	88
Individuals frequently using Internet, 55–74 years, 2010, per cent <sup>3</sup>	40	54
<b>Online media</b>		
Individuals using Internet for listening to web radio/watching web TV, 16–74 years, 2010, per cent <sup>3</sup>	26	56
Individuals using Internet for listening to web radio/watching web TV, 16–24 years, 2010, per cent <sup>3</sup>	48	69
Individuals using Internet for listening to web radio/watching web TV, 55–74 years, 2010, per cent <sup>3</sup>	11	33
Individuals using Internet for reading/downloading newspapers/news magazines, 16–74 years, 2010, per cent <sup>3</sup>	21	54
Individuals using Internet for reading/downloading newspapers/news magazines, 16–25 years, 2010, per cent <sup>3</sup>	27	47
Individuals using Internet for reading/downloading newspapers/news magazines, 55–74 years, 2010, per cent <sup>3</sup>	14	46
<b>Other</b>		
Number of journalists, 2008 or latest available year <sup>4</sup>	5 467	5 392

**Table 1: Media statistics in France and Sweden.**

<sup>1</sup> Source: Wikipedia, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Leckner & Facht, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Eurostat, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Source: OECD, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Source: SCB, 2010.

## 2.3. Different media systems

The media system of a country is closely linked with its political system, history and culture. Hallin and Mancini (2004) in a comparative study of 18 countries identify three overarching

media system models: the Polarized Pluralist model, the Democratic Corporatist model, and the Liberal model.

In short, the Polarized Pluralist model is characterized by a high level of politicization, with the state and political parties strongly intervening in many parts of society, and with a widespread scepticism about any conception of a 'common good'. The consumption of public information is high among the politically active population and low among the politically inactive population. The news media are normally considered to represent different political ideologies, and commit to these in a way that outweighs common professional culture. Ties between journalists and political actors are close, and the state intervenes actively in the media sector.

The Corporatist model is characterized by a strong emphasis on the role of organized social groups in society, a strong sense of commitment to the 'common good', and to rules and norms accepted across social divisions. The free flow of information is highly valued, but at the same time the state is seen as having a positive obligation to promote that flow. There is also a general culture of heavy consumption of information of public affairs. The media are perceived as channels for expressions of diverse social groups and ideologies. State interventions in the media are extensive, but at the same time high value is placed on media autonomy.

The Liberal model, finally, is characterized by a more individualistic conception of representation, in which the role of social groups, contrary to the two previous models, often are seen as promoting 'special interests' over 'common good'. The free flow of information is understood in the sense of free from state involvement. The notion of individualism and anti-political elements in the culture tend to overrule the emphasis on consumption of public information. The role of the media is seen as providing information to citizen-consumer and in being a 'watchdog' of government. Strong emphasis is put on limiting government intervention in the media sphere. The media mostly target wide audiences and emphasize public affairs less than in the other models.

The French media system has strong similarities with the Polarized Pluralist model, and that the Swedish media system is a typical representative of the Corporatist model.

### **3. MEDIA LOGIC**

In short, what news media do is to sample events from the real world and process them into stories using text, sound and pictures. Although each news event is unique in the sense that it can never be repeated in the same space and time, news, and how it is presented, is not a random procedure. On the contrary, economical and political pressures, working routines, professional ideals, ideas about audience taste and interest, and pressure of time lead to standardization of both the selection and the processing of news. News content is consequently shaped by structural factors from both within and outside the news organization (Epstein, 1978; Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; McQuail, 2005). Together these factors, or demands, form a sort of *media logic* that is superior to the individual journalist's own values, and that is reflected in professional standards of what is good news reporting (Altheide & Snow, 1979). Media logic also includes a professional evaluation of what events constitute news, and how they should be presented to the public. This applies to news in general, but also to specific sub-categories, such as political news, crime reporting or sports, to different types of news media, i.e. press, radio, television, and to different segments on the media market such as downmarket or upmarket newspapers, tabloid media or quality media.

The concept of media logic thus comprises two fundamental and overlapping editorial processes: the process of editorial work practice, i.e., *newsroom organization*, and the process of selecting and presenting news stories, i.e., *news evaluation*.

### 3.1. Newsroom organization

The following overview is limited to news media, news production and the editorial work that takes place within the newsroom. In this context the term *newsroom* refers to an editorial department employing primarily journalists, and is usually part of a larger media organization. The media organization itself may contain more than one news organization, and more than one kind of media. Most often these two types of organizations differ in terms of goals and bureaucracy, but general orientations of the media organization may influence decisions and priorities in the newsroom (Tunstall, 1971).

Research on news production has by tradition been based on studies of newsrooms. The analysis has focused mainly on factors outside or inside the media that somehow explain or illustrate how news is made. The key research questions have concerned what becomes news, and why. Quite often, these issues have been problematized and analysed in relation to the individual news worker, and his or her role in the news process.

Studies of news production took off after World War II, and received much attention during the 1950s (White, 1950; Gieber, 1956). The focus was on the journalist and how his personal values and experience influenced news selection. The individual employee was considered to have substantial independence in the news organization, and hence have strong influence over what became news. In the 1960s the research focused less on production issues, and rather more on questions about news content. Research findings, that listed the characteristics of events that were selected and published as news, received much attention (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Halloran et al., 1970).

During the 1970s, research shifted back to an organizational focus, but now structures within and outside the media came to the centre of attention (Tunstall, 1971; Epstein, 1973; Schlesinger, 1978; Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979). Editorial practices, professional standards and values, and the socialization of employees into the profession, were factors that were given great importance in explaining the selection of news. The individual journalist was regarded more or less as a cog in the editorial machinery, with very limited individual influence.

In the 1980s, research on news production was almost non-existent. It wasn't until the end of the decade that scholars addressed news production and the news worker's role again (Morrisson & Tumbler, 1988, Tunstall, 1993; Ekström & Nohrstedt, 1996; Löfgren-Nilsson, 1999), but now differently than four decades earlier. The journalist was regarded as an individual acting in relation to his professional surroundings, i.e., the economic, technological, time limiting and normative circumstances that shape the structural and conditional premises of news production. Rather than being completely subordinated to the editorial structure, the journalist was ascribed a certain degree of autonomy and individual choice.

After the turn of the millennium, production studies have mainly focused on issues concerning IT technology and its impact on news production in terms of converge and interactivity (Bardoel & Deuze, 2001; Singer 2004a, 2004b, 2006; Quandt, 2005; Karlsson, 2011). Multi-platform publishing and social media have initiated questioning and re-definitions of journalism, of who is a journalist, and of what news is. At the same time traditional editorial practices are reconsidered.

### 3.1.1. *Outside the newsroom: Political regulations and economical factors*

No news media operate in a vacuum. The media are part of society, affecting it and affected by it. The news process is surrounded by a number of conditions and factors that the media both adapt to and exploit. Two such very influential factors outside the media are political regulation and economical pressures.

In all countries and cultures laws and regulations enclose journalism, and to some degree media control exists everywhere. News media content has always been considered to have great impact on public opinion, and consequently the media have always been regulated in relation to the political system (Siebert et al., 1956). Put very simply, one can distinguish two main models for the relationship between political power and the media. In totalitarian states, the media are subordinated to political power and its interests. The political institutions control the media and use the law to restrict and curtail their freedom. In democratic states the relation is basically the opposite; media freedom and freedom of establishment are protected by the political system. Freedom of information legislation safeguards everyone's right to start and to own media, and without censorship to decide what to publish.

This being said, one should still keep in mind that the media also in democratic countries are submitted to political control. As Hallin and Mancini (2004) in their previously mentioned study of media systems show, the state may interfere with news production in various ways. One is through the system of ethical codes. For example, in Great Britain, the Press Council was founded after political pressures, while its counterpart in Sweden was a voluntary initiative taken by the media establishment itself. The state may also interfere by regulation of public service media. In some European countries these news media are partly or entirely regarded as government channels transmitting content, including news, that are in line with government policy. In other countries they have been pointed out as models of objective and unbiased journalism, although publically financed. Furthermore, some countries have strong traditions of party press with the outspoken purpose to support a political agenda.

During the 1990s and 2000s there has in Europe, however, been a shift away from traditional media governing towards media governance (McQuail, 2003; Meier, 2011). Previous centralized structures and steering mechanisms, and ruling by command and control, have been replaced by de-centralized co- and self-regulation, open proceedings with ongoing decision-making processes, and agreement by deliberations. This does, however, not mean that the government or the state is completely absent from media governance. Rather, it remains one among several central stakeholders regulating the media system, the others being the media themselves, civil society organizations, as well as the public.

According to Dennis McQuail (2008) the factors explaining the transition from government to governance is the higher centrality and pervasiveness of electronic media, the decline of national sovereignty over the flow of media content and, last but not least, the greater degree of commercialization and marketization of all forms of public communication.

Today most news media, no matter whether regional, national or transnational, are being run as commercial business enterprises. With the last decades' growing competition among daily newspapers and a deregulated broadcasting market, the focus on the media's profitability has been intensified. Not even public service media, which in many countries are financed through licence fees or through other forms of state aid, such as taxes, are exempt from the constraint of audience ratings. Like all radio and television companies, public service media are dependent on large audiences for their existence, since this is the way to legitimize their funding through public means. If, and when, public service media are marginalized on the broadcasting market, the Government may choose to reduce allocations, forcing savings or changing the criteria for funding (McQuail, 1986).

Newspapers that are not profitable are closed down, and radio or television programs with low rating figures often disappear from the broadcasting schedules or are shifted to less popular time slots (Wadbring, 2004). It has been noticed that market share considerations tend to promote news and content that appeals to wider audiences, and is less costly to produce (Allern, 2002). Consequently, commercialized news production has been shown to favour entertaining, sensational and dramatic news to news of importance and relevance (Rowe, 2010; McChesney, 2003; Ghersetti, 2000).

### ***3.1.2. Inside the newsroom: routines, formats and the role of the reporter***

News work is about covering the unforeseen, and reporting on the unexpected. It is also about topicality, about capturing and describing the latest development of events, and about doing so under time pressure, and within a production process that involves a large number of people both within and outside the news organization. That is why the production of daily news requires structure and coordination. The American media researcher Gaye Tuchman (1973), states that journalists may even have a stronger need than other professions to control their work, since they are called upon to give accounts of a wide variety of unexpected events on a routine basis.

Research on news media shows that news is extraordinarily homogeneous. Shoemaker and Cohen (2006) found that similarity is more distinguished than dissimilarity in the study of topics in news media across 10 countries from around the world. Likewise, van Dijk (1988) showed that newspaper stories from different countries were all shaped by the same discursive structure: the inverted pyramid. Further, it seems that observed differences between press, radio and television in terms of technologies, political orientation, and newsgathering routines do not matter much when it comes to what events that become news and how they are presented to the audience (Tunstall, 1971; Molotch & Lester, 1975; Gans, 1980; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Ryfe, 2006).

The offered explanation is that news is the product of a set of organizational routines that do not vary much across time, place, or organization. Although some studies indicate differences between newsrooms structures in different countries, none of them are really contradictory to the concept of newsrooms routines. One of these studies, e.g., points to a higher level of division of labour among American than European journalists (Donsbach, 1995), and another study shows a substantially higher role differentiation in British newsrooms than in German ones (Esser, 1998). But in conclusion, there is no research on newsrooms organizations that points to the lack of a routinized work process, or to important differences between newsroom structure and culture in different countries.

The principles that are central to selection and presentation of news are basically the same; the *news routines* are similar in most types of news media. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) define news routines as ‘patterned, routinized, repeated practices, and forms that media workers use to do their jobs’. The routines are dictated by technology, deadlines, publishing area and professional norms (McNair, 1998; Reese 2001). The purpose of these routines is at least threefold. First, the news organization, like most businesses, within available budget, publication area and time, is to deliver the most acceptable product to the news consumer. Second, the news organization is to deliver the news as quickly as possible, preferably before competing news media, and definitely while it is still highly topical. Third, newsrooms routinize tasks because it facilitates the control of both workflow and single working moments.

Integrated into the discussion of news routines are also the concepts of news beats (Fishman, 1980) or news nets (Tuchman, 1978). Newsrooms create beats or nets in geographical or activity domains outside the newsroom where they expect to find essential information – the

raw material that becomes news. This is a way to secure the generation of news, and to rationalize the finding of news stories that fit into the media profile and are interesting to the media audience. That is why many reporters start their working day by calling hospitals, fire and police departments; sources that almost by default are considered to generate news.

Finding news material – the content – may be described as one of the two basic dimensions of news work. The second one being the processing of the content into *news formats*. News formats refers to standardized patterns and forms (sub-routines) for dealing with specific themes within the news genre, based on media specifics such as available area and means of expression, like sound, photos, graphics, video and text. For instance Altheide (1985) describes a ‘format for crisis’ in television news, which transcends the particularities of events and gives a common shape to the handling of different news stories. The main conditions necessary for the news handling of a crisis on a continuing basis are accessibility (to information or to the site of the crisis), visual quality (of film or tape), drama and action, relevance to the audience and thematic unity.

Some researchers and practitioners have stressed the importance of formats in news production up to the point where content is regarded as completely subordinated media attributes. Marshal McLuhan’s (1967) famous slogan ‘The media is the message’ may be understood as an expression of the idea that events that don’t fit the pre-defined media formats do not become news.

In general, all kinds of news media are strictly formatted. Both the printed daily newspapers and broadcast news media only have room for a limited number of news stories. In newspapers, it is a choice to be set to a fixed number of pages, in radio and television news to a certain number of minutes. Only in exceptional cases, when extraordinary big news events occur, is the regular publishing area extended with extra pages and broadcasts. Also on ordinary news days only the most newsworthy events – the most important, most dramatic or sensational – reach the national news media, and of these only very few end up on the front page or in then news program’s headlines. In traditional media with less reach or circulation, such as regional and local newspapers, the principles are the same but the news reporting is adapted to a smaller and more limited audience.

On the digital platforms, however, the publishing area is in principle unlimited; all news may be fitted and publications take place continuously. In these cases it is rather a question of adapting the news selection and formatting to a structure that makes the news stories easy to find and chose from, and to new patterns of news consumption. Mobile media such as laptops, smartphones and tablet computers enable people to consume news in different ways than traditional media. Dimmick et al. (2010) have identified what they call news consumption in the interstices. By this they refer to new niches in time and space for consuming the latest news, such as when queuing for the bus, waiting at the dentist’s or during lunchtime. Inevitably, it is rather a matter of quick updates than extensive reading.

The online news is adapted to the characteristics of the digital platform and thus above all give priority to speed and timeliness. Quite often decisions of instant publication overrule the traditional journalistic standards of criticism of the sources and correctness, not least since the news then constantly are corrected, updated and reframed as the event develops. Correspondingly, online news stories are quickly replaced by other and more recent ones (Hedman, 2006; Karlsson & Strömbäck, 2010). Another sign of adaptation is that the news text is very short, sometimes no more than a headline, a picture, and a few paragraphs (Ericsson & Tomic, 2011). This is partly an adjustment to the audience’s new patterns of consumption, partly to



the fact that mobile media displays are normally very small. That is also why the online news frequently link to other information on the web, to comment sections, blogs and chat forums.

As mentioned above, newsrooms are characterized by defined structures and practices. The everyday news work usually follows established lines of production (Johansson, 2008; Schlesinger, 1978). It begins with the morning meeting where senior editors draw the outlines of today's news content, and then continues – often on departmental level – with meetings where sub-editors hand out the reporters' assignments. Evaluations of yesterday's newspaper or latest newscast, minor adjustments and handovers are made during the day. Finally, the work focuses and compiles before the main transmission or deadline in the evening. This is one of the characteristics of newsroom structure. Another one is great flexibility. When something extraordinary happens, the newsroom very quickly re-organizes and adapts to existing circumstances. Assignments are re-directed, extra staff members are summoned, resources are re-allocated and extra editions are considered. Consequently, the newsroom structure is somewhat contradictory being at the same time fixed and flexible.

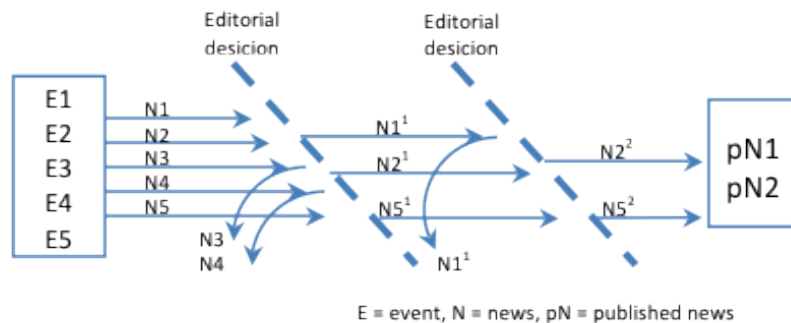
In the same way, the newsroom procedures of decision-making are contradictory. The *role of the reporter* is both subordinated and independent. On the one hand, the newsroom routines and the editor most often dictate his work assignment. But on the other hand, he is free to negotiate and resolve problems in his own way, e.g. by deciding which sources to use and angles to choose (Dickinson, 2007; Ericson et al., 1989). Special reporters, for example, are more self-sustaining and also expected to take initiatives regarding news selection. Löfgren-Nilsson (1999) describes newsrooms as atomic organizations where the ties between different groups are few and rarely enforced. Collective action is thus combined with single initiatives, and newsroom routines with individual creativity. Odén et al. (2009), in a study of how the Swedish media covered the tsunami catastrophe in Thailand 2004, concludes that the reporters in the very acute first days of the events were encouraged to take individual initiatives, but also that they thereafter quickly re-adapted to editorial routines and decisions. So, at the same time as newsroom routines clearly contribute to a limitation of the individual journalist's professional freedom, the notion of independent journalism, and the independent reporter, is deeply rooted in journalism culture. This applies both in relation to the surrounding society, and in relation to editorial management.

There are mainly two self-conceptions of the reporter's role to be distinguished: the neutral, informative reporter, objectively and impartially reporting on what is happening, and the participating reporter, investigating persons and institutions in power on behalf of the public. Journalists themselves put forward both of these roles, but an overview of a 21-nation study conclude that 'the single professional role most journalists agree on is the importance of getting information to the public quickly' (Weaver, 1998).

### **3.2. News evaluation and selection**

When asked what news is, most journalists would answer that it is what interests the public, and what they as professionals intuitively recognize as news (McQuail 2005). However, as an answer to the very central question of why some events are selected to become news and are edited for publication, while others are not, this is not very convincing. Although the professional themselves hesitate to admit it, news evaluations and selection are submitted to routines and traditional cultural values.

A classical concept in this context is the one of *gatekeeping*, introduced by White (1950) in his early studies of news selection. The news worker operates like a gatekeeper who decides which news to send forward along the production line, and which ones to stop. This is done in relation to other news topics of the day, the access to relevant pictures and video material, whether the news story has an interesting angle, or an interesting angle may be added, whether any other media already have published the story, and so on. Reporters, photographers and editors make these decisions repeatedly all along the news process. In principle, a news story may be rejected as late as just before printing starts or the news programme goes on the air.



**Figure 1: Gatekeeping – the selection of news in the editorial workflow** (Developed from White, 1950, and from University of Twente, 2011)

Jackie Harrison (2006) states in her guide to the history and key concepts of news, that news is selected by journalists ‘who exercise their new sense within the constraints of news organizations within which they operate.’ This selection is guided by an understanding of news values, which is ‘passed down to new generations of journalists through a process of training and socialisation’.

Basically, the news values, or news criteria, are nothing but the qualities an event must possess in order to be evaluated as either interesting to the public or necessary for the public to know about. A large number of studies have been conducted in this field, the first and most cited one being Galtung and Ruge’s article from 1965. One could say that later research only to a lesser extent has moderated the list of news values presented in the Norwegian study. Most studies in the field are repeating the importance of criteria that have to do with prominence, proximity, and deviance in terms of sensation, surprise and exception. Some also add conflict and negativity as two frequently occurring criteria (Prakke, 1969; Gans, 1979; Shoemaker et al., 1987; McManus, 1994). In 2001 Harcup and O’Neill carried out an empirical study of the UK press by applying the news factors used almost four decades earlier by Galtung and Ruge. They found great similarities with the original study, but also some differences. Their conclusion was that news stories must generally satisfy one or more of the following requirements to be selected (Harcup & O’Neill, 2001):

- *The power elite* – stories concerning powerful individuals, organizations or institutions.
- *Celebrity* – stories concerning people who are already famous.
- *Entertainment* – stories concerning sex, show business, human interest, animals, an unfolding drama, or offering opportunities for humorous treatment, entertaining photographs or witty headlines.
- *Surprise* – stories that have an element of surprise and/or contrast.
- *Bad news* – stories with particular negative overtones, such as conflict or tragedy.

- *Good news* – stories with particular positive overtones such as rescue and cure.
- *Magnitude* – stories that are perceived as sufficiently significant either in the number of people involved or in the potential impact.
- *Relevance* – stories about issues, groups and nations perceived to be relevant to the audience.
- *Follow-up* – stories about subjects already in the news.
- *Newspaper agenda* – stories that set or fit the news organization's own agenda.

Unlike previous studies Harcup and O'Neill (2001) suggest that humour and positive occurrences, such the cure of diseases and miraculous rescues, are newsworthy. Entertaining news appeared in all the newspapers analysed, and one of their conclusions is that today's journalism aims to equally entertain and inform. Therefore, no contemporary set of news values is complete without an 'entertainment' factor. A significant sub-category in this field is pictures. If a story provides a good picture opportunity then it is often included even when there is little obvious inherent newsworthiness.

Some of the news values are intrinsic in the news story from the beginning; others may be accentuated or even added by giving the story a specific angle. A story that is considered important but rather dull, e.g. an Act of Parliament, may be edited or framed in a way that makes it more interesting to the public. To focus on conflicts or a known politician are common angles used to increase the newsworthiness of this kind of stories.

The Norwegian media researcher Gudmund Hernes (1983) has distinguished a number of what he calls mediatization techniques, i.e. techniques that the media will use to catch the public's attention. Accordingly, a news story may be selected because it holds certain qualities, but these may also be reinforced or added in processing the story. The mediatization techniques that Hernes lists are:

- *Accentuation* – accentuated quotes are emphasized, and sources that express themselves shortly, clearly and in round terms are preferred.
- *Simplification* – complexity is replaced by simplicity. There should not be too many arguments or nuances.
- *Polarization* – polarization and conflicts attract attention. They also evoke emotions and often emphasize different aspects of a dispute.
- *Intensification* – a sudden eruption, strikes, violence, and other dramatic occurrences are exiting. They also make the story more animated and captivating.
- *Concretization* – to pay attention to what is concrete, and to concretize what is vague or abstract, are ways to catch and keep people's attention.
- *Personalization* – there are few things that interest people as much as other people. The focus on single persons enables identification.

Yet another mediatization technique to be added to the list is *stereotyping*. A stereotype is a highly simplified presentation of a person, event or condition shared by a large number of people. Stereotypes are frequently used in news reporting, for several reasons. One is that the audience will recognize the outline of the news story and therefore better assimilate it, in other words, it is a matter of identification (Strömbäck, 2000). Another is that stereotypes affect the journalistic work process (Gumpert & Cathart, 1988). Both journalists and their sources share, of course, stereotype understandings of people and events, and of how certain events evolve that are common in our society and culture.

An example of how news stereotypes work is the Swedish media reporting from the earthquake in Mexico City in 1985 (Hvitfelt, 1989). Earthquakes are archetypical news; they occur regularly and get quite a lot of media attention. The stereotype perception of an earthquake includes the belief that extensive panic and fire should break out, and looting should take

place. These were also typical features in the Swedish media reporting from the scene. In reality, however, panic and fires were rather limited, and not a lot of looting did occur. Furthermore, the earthquake had only hit a small part of the city. Consequently, news stereotyping in this case contributed to a misleading and somewhat exaggerated reporting of the earthquake.

Studies that have examined the universality of news values find that they are only to some degree influenced by social-economic, cultural and political differences (Kuhn, 2005; Lavie & Lehman-Wilzig, 2003; Wilke & Reineman, 2001). It rather seems that in Western countries adherence to news values is estimated as more ‘professional’, eliminating bias, political or otherwise. But there are other conditions that may influence the news evaluation. As technology changes many of the ways in which news is produced and received, and continuous deadlines in a 24-hour online news stream are creating new conditions on the media market, ‘re-cency’ and ‘competition’ may become more dominant selection criteria, as well as the ‘type of audience’ (O’Neill & Harcup, 2009).

The gatekeeping role has perhaps been the one most explicitly affected by technological development, as the Internet and associated digital technologies take at least some newsgathering and selections routines out of journalists’ hands. In a traditional media environment, the journalist selects a relatively limited number of stories for dissemination and rejects the rest, seeing to it that ‘the community shall hear as a fact only those events which the newsman, as the representative of his culture, believes to be true’ (White, 1950). With the Internet and social media, reporters no longer have the monopoly of news selection. Traditional news media are no longer the only ones to set the news agenda, or choose news perspectives and angles. Through Facebook, Twitter and YouTube news issues are introduced and widely spread even before they reach print, radio and television media. In recent years the examples of this have multiplied, the uprising in Cairo and the revolution in Libya in 2011 being some of the latest ones.

#### **4. ORGANIZATION OF NEWS WORK WHEN CRISES OCCUR**

The following overview of how newsrooms work when crises and catastrophes occur is based on interviews with French and Swedish media representatives. The interviewed persons are Bérénice Ravache, the general secretary of public service Radio France, and Bruno Lenormant, the general secretary of its local network radio France Bleu, Yannick Letranchant, the director in charge of the coordination of editorial staffs of France 2 and France 3 public service television networks, and an editor of a national French newspaper. This person wishes to remain anonymous, and that the name of the newspaper should not be published in this report.

In Sweden interviews have been conducted with Martin Jönsson, the managing editor of *Svenska Dagbladet* (SVD), the third largest morning paper published in Stockholm, Michael Österlund, an executive producer, also deputy managing editor, at the news department of public service radio Sveriges Radio (SR), and with Anja Hildén, an executive producer at Rapport, the largest news program at Sveriges Television (SVT), the public service network.

##### **4.1. The acute phase**

When a crisis or disaster occurs, the newsrooms have two immediate priorities: to find out what has happened as soon as possible, and to relay information to the public as quickly as possible. Martin Jönsson, managing editor at *Svenska Dagbladet*, describes the situation as

paradoxical: ‘the public’s need for information is often at the greatest when the media has the least information’.

Generally, newsrooms are informed that something has happened by a news flash, a phone call from some source among the public or from a government authority, or through a tweet or similar information in the social media. The news editors who are in the office usually gather directly. This routine applies both to French and Swedish newsrooms, and is not dependent on the type of media. All the newsrooms that have been contacted in this report have procedures for how these types of events should be handled, even if not necessarily in writing.

The very first question that the news workers seek to answer is *What has happened?* Sometimes the breaking news says little more than that something disastrous *has* happened, like a gas explosion, a car bomb or an earthquake. In these cases the newspapers go online, while radio and television may choose between different channels. Sveriges Radio may, for example, interrupt broadcasting for a very short message saying something has happened and that more information will follow in the next regular newscast. The television broadcasters that have access to 24-hour news channels can go on air with the breaking news directly, or wait and publish it in an extra new bulletin, online, or possibly on teletext. The basic principle is to use the platform that reaches the public most quickly.

The director in charge of the coordination of editorial staffs of France 2 and France 3 public service television points out that apart from informing the public, an additional task on the first day is to advise people who are facing the crisis how to act. Although several of the other interviewees mention the importance of advising, they don’t see it as their task to do so. Rather, advising is a part of the news reporting since official authorities often issue warnings when interviewed. Even though Sverige Radio is responsible for handling the so-called VMA-service (Important Public Announcement Service) (Odén, 2011), the interviewed news editor specifically points out that this is not the responsibility of the radio news department, but of the Department of Public Announcements.

Another issue that several editors raise is that of the employees’ safety. Crises and disasters may also affect one’s own editorial staffs, or put them in danger. This kind of considerations is involved from the start and is most relevant when working assignments are distributed.

Already during the initial acute phase, which may be as short as the first 15 minutes, the editors usually also decide whether to produce special broadcasts and extra editions, or not. For radio and television this may include an abrupt rearrangement of TV- or radio-schedules, and live broadcasting. This is, e.g., what happened in most European countries in connection with the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on 9/11/2001.

Which events justify live broadcasts and rearranged schedules, and which ones ‘only’ lead to extra pages or special editions is decided from time to time on the basis of the newsworthiness of the event. But generally the principal news criteria are applied: The more serious the event, the more people that are affected and the closer to the home audience it occurs, the greater the news value. However, these are not the only factors to influence the newsrooms decisions. Also, competition with other media may trigger extra efforts. Even when exceptional events occur, news media strive to be first and have the best – which often equals the most extensive – coverage of the events.

## 4.2. Different from usual

In essence, news work when crises and disasters occur doesn't differ to any large extent from ordinary newsroom routines: reporters seek, retrieve and process news material, photographers supply photos, editors sort and select among news stories, layout editors design the pages and news are published. But the pace and intensity of work is multiplied. As described by the news editor of the French national paper: *'during the crisis the rhythm is different: more people are at work and they work a longer time in order to ensure a nonstop reporting. All the departments are implied for bringing their understanding of the event. The newspaper layout may be profoundly changed.'* Subsequently, regular tasks are set aside and staff released from other duties. Additional staff members are called in if necessary. The managing editor of *Svenska Dagbladet* says that it is in these situations that the newsroom actually functions at its best; when established procedures are combined with intuition and improvised approaches and solutions.

## 4.3. After the first phase

After the first phase in which the most important thing is what has happened and who is affected, rather quickly the elements of depth and analysis enter into the reporting. The questions will then be: Why did it happen and who is responsible? How did it happen and what are the consequences? Reporting is more elaborate and it is possible to make new contextualizations of the event.

The two representatives from Radio France and Radio France Bleu even point out that during the days following the first acute phase of the crisis the radio news, in the public service perspective, should assist the return to normality and promote solidarity. And the editor of France 2 and France 3 public service television describes the change of focus in the reporting as going from showing to explaining; the TV news should make people understand the situation.

None of the Swedish media representatives follow these lines of arguments. Their description of reporting on crises rather followed a narrative line. Shortly after the initial acute phase usually the human-interest perspectives are forwarded, i.e. personal stories and experiences. Analysis and in-depth descriptions of the situation come in a third step of the reporting. Every new piece of information that is added leads to new kind of stories, new personal statements, and new analysis. The *Svenska Dagbladet* managing editor describes it as the three cornerstones of crisis reporting: the follow-ups of events, the personal stories, and the in-depth analysis. These are the three perspectives of the crisis reporting, that repeatedly overlap and loop and thus frame the image of crisis.

## 4.4. The sources

All the interviewees confirm that the sources related to a disaster or crisis are many and of very different kinds. They may include government officials and private individuals, the own reporters and other news media, experts, medical staff and rescue workers. Some are eyewitnesses, and thus primary sources; others reproduce what someone else has said. They all emphasize the importance of checking sources, and of avoiding the spread of false information or rumours through the media.

*Governmental authorities and official sources* are among the most important ones. These are needed in the initial phase to confirm what has happened, if any are killed or injured, if perpetrators have been identified, etc. As the event develops, it is also with these sources that reporters seek information about emergency response, financial and material losses, and social

and political consequences. The accessibility of official sources, and the type of information they provide, can thus greatly influence the image of the crisis that the media transmit to the public.

Since Radio France is represented in operational centres that are activated to deal with crisis when they occur, they automatically have access to all the information deriving from these sources. The other media, however, have no such relation to the official sources, and their experience from working with them differs.

Both Radio France, and France 2 and France 3 public service television, report that the authorities' spokesmen are usually very accessible, but that reporters also to a great extent use their personal contacts. The Swedish interviewees have a more critical attitude. The SVT executive producer claims that authorities and politicians ought to be more accessible in connection with crisis. And *Svenska Dagbladet*'s managing editor points out that it usually takes too long for authorities to provide accurate information. He believes that the sooner authorities can come up with reliable and confirmed facts, the easier it is for the media to provide citizens with correct news. When the authorities delay, they open up for speculations and rumours. In these situations the media will not wait for official sources but seek information elsewhere.

Another type of resource that is growing in importance is *social media*, such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. Although, by the French editors the social media are considered only as one among many sources, possibly even less reliable than others and therefore somewhat less used.

All three representatives from Swedish media, however, emphasize the importance of using social media when something happens, although it is currently done in varying degrees. At the newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* efforts to incorporate social media into the newsroom routines have been going on for the last few years. According to the editorial manager, social media have made journalistic work both easier and harder; they have increased the pace of the news work for better or worse. Via hash tags (#) the reporters can always find someone who is on site, and access to direct sources is thus much easier. As an example, the tweet 'Holy shit, Oslo just exploded' was on the Internet 30 seconds after the bomb went off in the Norwegian capital on 22 July 2011. The problem is that the information disseminated may be hard to confirm, and that the credibility of the source most often is uncertain. On the other hand, even the most credible sources may be found in the social media; those who have just witnessed what happened and who at that moment knows more than most official sources. For most journalists is still difficult to navigate in the social media, but according to the editors, that is because they are not yet used to interpret and evaluate information that is exposed there. All three Swedish newsrooms have today a stated policy to expand the use of social media in their news work.

#### **4.5. The role of the media when crises occur**

When it comes to the question of what role the media play – or should play – when crises or catastrophes occur, the situation differs considerably between the two countries. In France a legislation that was passed in 1986 (articles 48 and 54 of Loi n° 86–1067 du 30 Septembre 1986 relative à la liberté de communication) define the obligations of public service radio and television in cases when crisis occur. Article 54 states that the Government at any time may impose on France Televisions and radio France Bleu to broadcast all the declarations or communications that are deemed necessary due to national defence issues, public security, and governmental communication in crisis situations. In these cases the broadcasting is an-

nounced as emanating from the Government. Furthermore, in The National Security Guideline (DNS – Directive Nationale de Sécurité<sup>3</sup>) for the audiovisual and information sector, both the public service France Télévisions and France Bleu are identified as operators of vital importance (OIV – Opérateur d'Importance Vitale), by which they are obliged to support national governmental (from the President) or territorial (from prefects or regional governments) communication and public information. No such, or similar, obligations are imposed on the French printed press.

In Sweden no legislation or regulations administrate the media when crises strike, apart from the authorities' legal right to use Sveriges Radio to broadcast important announcements to the public. The three Swedish editors do not even consider the authorities' information needs in these situations when reasoning about the media's role. On the contrary, they rely entirely on their own professional evaluations of what information the public needs, and wants, and hence on what that is newsworthy. Sveriges Radio's news director even stresses the impact of neutrality as a principle: '*We do not consider whether people will be worried when we broadcast news. We take no such account. It is not part of our job to reassure the public*'. However, they all think that fast and accurate information helps to explain the actual situation and thus indirectly may have a calming effect on the public. What an editor considers newsworthy may also coincide with official authorities' need to give information, in which case it will be published.

## **5. TWO SWEDISH EXAMPLES**

The following examples of how newsrooms plan for oncoming disasters and react to catastrophes are both taken from previous research reports. The first one shows the reasoning of the news staffs of Rapport, Sweden's most popular TV news programme, regarding an oncoming snowstorm. The account is based on participant observation and was published in *Vid nyhetsdesken (At the News Desk, Johansson, 2008)*. The second example describes how Swedish news media were alerted and responded to the fact that many Swedes were killed by tsunami waves in Thailand in 2004. It is based on interviews with editorial staffs and was first published in the article *Independence – Then Adaption (Odén, et al., 2009)*.

### **5.1. Waiting for the snowstorm, January 2007**

On Wednesday 17 January 2007 the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute (SMHI) issues a warning about an oncoming snowstorm that is expected to hit the Southern parts of Sweden during the weekend. Although there are several days left, Rapport, the newsroom at the public service television stationed in Stockholm, prepare for the situation. How to handle the warning?

The thing is, that Rapport plans to invest quite a lot of resources on a weekend trip with the OB van (outside broadcasting van) to Gotland, an island off the Swedish east coast. The background is the planned Baltic Sea gas pipeline, and an information meeting in Visby, the main city on the island, which the newsroom wants to cover. In addition, it will make several news reports about the islanders and the pipeline. Rapport has not broadcasted much about the gas pipeline in the past and wants to make some news stories 'on the spot'. The problem reporting on the storm is the OB van. If there is a storm on its way to southern Sweden and the

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<sup>3</sup> Approved by decision of the Prime Minister on 19 May 2008.



bus is sent to Gotland, the newsroom cannot get the pictures and features it wants. Therefore, it becomes especially important to plan ahead.

The question is where to send the OB van. One important factor is, of course, where the anticipated storm is expected to be most devastating, in Småland, a midland region, or on the west coast? The decision is that the bus will be sent to Småland. The reason is that the emergency manager in the town of Ljungby is a good person to interview. He has been involved in previous crisis reporting and several of the editors remind themselves of how he expressed himself in a media-like manner – clear, concise and with a natural authority.

But it is not yet certain if there will be a storm or not. During Thursday morning one of the staff keeps permanent control on SMHI's estimation of the storm status, and at 10 a.m. there is a 'weather-forecast-meeting' with SMHI. It then appears that the storm will not be of the same magnitude as the last one that hit Sweden. It is rather a question of whether a storm warning should be promoted at all. No one is talking about a hurricane any more. The conclusion is that heavy snowing the night before Sunday might cause problems, but that does not require any special coverage. The alert is blown off and the planned trip to Gotland will be realized as planned.

## **5.2. When the tsunami hit Thailand on 25 December 2004**

The tsunami catastrophe received more coverage in Swedish media than any other single event during the past twenty years. Between 26 December 2004 and 1 January 2005, 84 per cent of all airtime on Rapport 7.30 p.m., Sweden's most popular TV-news program, was devoted to the Indian Ocean tsunami and its consequences. The explanation is that 543 Swedes on Christmas vacation in Thailand were killed by the two tidal waves that hit the coast.

On Christmas night 2004, most newsrooms in Sweden were deserted. Only the newsrooms of the single copy sale papers, *Aftonbladet* and *Expressen*, were working. The night had been quiet. It was almost 4 a.m. and all pages had been sent to the printers. *Expressen*'s journalists went home. The duty web editor would arrive in one hour. Then, the stillness at *Aftonbladet* was suddenly interrupted. Telephones started ringing and messages flooded the e-mail. Something had happened. From Kata Beach in Phuket, a man on a mobile phone told the one reporter on duty about a massive tidal wave that had swept in, and that many people were dead or injured. A major event soon unfolded for the slimmed down night staff. A quick check showed that the national news agency TT, as well as the BBC and CNN had not received any reports of a tidal wave.

The tempo in the newsroom rose. Shortly after 4.45 a.m., the web editor was woken up by a telephone call. From his home he quickly published a text in the online newspaper. Tourists started to send photos from their cell phones. The editors asked for more pictures. More employees were called into the newsroom. *Aftonbladet* mobilized.

Like thousands of other Swedes, a number of journalists were on vacation in Thailand. One reporter from *Aftonbladet*, a stringer<sup>4</sup> and some freelance journalists and photographers called. They started to work immediately. At 5 a.m., *Aftonbladet*'s printers changed the paper rolls. The front page and three news pages were replaced with new pages. Half of the regular edition on Boxing Day brought news of the tsunami.<sup>5</sup> *Aftonbladet* was the first newspaper in Europe to publish news about the tidal waves in Thailand.

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<sup>4</sup> Freelance journalist/photographer that contributes reports or photos to a news organization on an on-going basis but is paid individually for each piece of published or broadcast work.

<sup>5</sup> According to editor-in-chief, Niklas Silow.

*Expressen's* duty web editor came in to work at 5 a.m. One short hour without staff in the newsroom and *Expressen* was already lagging behind *Aftonbladet*, its main competitor. At 5.42 a.m. TT news agency sent out a breaking news telegram. News editors and the editors-in-chief of all major news media were then woken up. The telegram announced:

*'Tourists missing in Thailand*

*Many tourists missing after enormous tidal wave sweeps over holiday resort Phuket in southern Thailand, reports public radio.'*

The foreign news editor at Sveriges Radio (SR) was on vacation, but woken by the TT telegram. He immediately called in employees to the foreign news desk. A producer and sub-editor were also called into the newsroom. Two telegram editors had been on duty during the night. SR broadcasts news every hour at night-time. In the 6 a.m. news broadcast, the radio reported that a tidal wave had hit Thailand and fifteen minutes later, the telegram editors published a feature on their website.

*Expressen's* web editor also responded to the TT telegram at 5.42 a.m. He made sure that staff was called into the newsroom. When the news editor read words like 'holiday resort', 'tidal wave' and 'many tourists missing', he decided to send employees to Phuket. Some freelance reporters in Southeast Asia were immediately requested to make their way to Thailand. Early morning website readers were encouraged to 'Call *Expressen!*' This is how the newspaper located a photographer on vacation in Phuket who witnessed the tidal wave.

The newsrooms of Stockholm's two largest subscribed newspapers, *Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet*, were empty when the TT telegram arrived. But *Svenska Dagbladet* subscribed to a TT service where the news agency's breaking news was automatically published on the newspaper's online version.<sup>6</sup> That is why TT telegrams were already published there at 6 a.m. *Dagens Nyheter's* web editor was not in Stockholm when he received the news flash at 5.42 a.m. but he immediately went on the Internet and published the TT telegram on the online edition. The web newsroom should have been closed, but employees were called into work.<sup>7</sup> The newspaper's editor-in-chief and edition coordinator were also woken by the TT telegram.

In the next few hours the different newsrooms were staffed, and janitors, printers and switchboard-staff were also called to work. Employees came in to work voluntarily, and others were called back from their vacations. Preparations were taken for extra editions and broadcasts. Also, all editors decided to send reporters and photographers to Thailand as quickly as possible. In the mean time they tried to find and relocate persons already in South East Asia. SVT's EU-reporter was on vacation in India with her family. When she heard about the catastrophe, she immediately travelled to the tsunami-struck areas in southern India. Another employee was in Sri Lanka. She had witnessed the tidal wave. The subscribed newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* had one reporter in Thailand, a theatre critic who was on vacation in Phuket.

Like everyone else on the night shift, the night reporter at *Aftonbladet* who answered the first call from desperate Swedes in Thailand was still at work at 11.30 a.m. when the extra edition was printed. She worked through three deadlines before going home. Twelve reporters in the newsroom wrote about the tsunami in the newspaper next day.

*'The job was really heavy. People rang us while they were walking around looking for their families; they were crying and begging for help. We couldn't tell them it wasn't our job. And*

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<sup>6</sup> Several provincial newspapers also subscribe to the TT service.

<sup>7</sup> The web newsroom was most active during working hours on weekdays, when there were also most readers. Activity was considerably lower during nights and weekends.

*the situation in the newsroom was chaotic with all the calls from people asking us to publish photos of their missing relatives,'* said one reporter.

Telephone connections with Thailand were unreliable. The newsrooms also received calls from worried relatives in Sweden, who were angry and desperate because the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not answer their calls. They wondered how much newsrooms knew. They called news media since the Ministry had not published any information on its website.

Pressure was peaking in newsrooms. Desperate people never stopped calling. The situation was chaotic. Receptionists couldn't handle all the calls, and newsrooms couldn't plan their work properly. Calls continued for several days, and journalists felt obligated to answer them.

All newsrooms, except for subscribed newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet*, were in a hurry to send reporters and photographers to Southeast Asia. They sent employees to Phuket even though Sri Lanka seemed worst hit by the tsunami at first. Newsroom directors explained their focus on Thailand: *'We saw to the interests of our readers. Foreign newsrooms wrote about Aceh and other countries based on telegrams and information from other sources,'* said *Expressen's* edition coordinator. SR's foreign news editor said: *'Maybe we concentrated too much on Swedes and not enough on Thais. But Swedish makes better radio than foreign languages with interpreters. We decided that our listeners would be more interested in hearing about Swedes.'*

For many reporters, the Christmas/New Year break came to an abrupt end when they were sent to Phuket. When the telephone rang, TV4's foreign news reporter, Stefan Nieminen, was at home in bed in Gällivare in the very north of Sweden. It was snowing. There were no flights from Gällivare that day. Nieminen's wife drove him 250 km to Luleå while he called Scandinavian Airlines, SAS, and asked them to hold his plane. They were late because of the weather. He also knew that he would arrive late at the airport in Stockholm. He called SAS and Thai Airlines and asked them to check him in before he arrived. This was not easy. Thai would not compromise, and said he had to check in personally. In Stockholm photographer Paul Kuchar tried to persuade them. *'We reached the domestic terminal by 1.40 p.m. Thai was due to leave from the international terminal at 2 p.m. You can usually find transport between the domestic and international terminals when you're in a hurry, but not on Boxing Day. I had to run along the corridors with all of my hand luggage,'* Nieminen said.

The next problem was boarding the plane without a ticket. Photographer Paul Kuchar had both tickets, and he stood on the plane with his foot between the doors so they couldn't be closed. Security guards realized the seriousness of the situation, and offered a guarded escort to the gate – without a boarding card. When Nieminen and Kuchar arrived in Phuket, they contacted the newsroom in Stockholm and then travelled by taxi to Patong Beach where they found a satellite uplink. Complete devastation was just around the corner. *'The first feature was ready in half an hour and I went live on air in the morning news on December 27,'* Nieminen said.

Many other reporters and photographers confronted similar problems, and were sent to Thailand with almost no time for preparations. *Expressen's* reporter Tommy Schönstedt was not working on Boxing Day, and was just about to leave Stockholm. He drove past the newsroom to collect a few things. But the news editor had decided to send more employees to Thailand and asked Schönstedt to go. The time was 12.35 p.m. The plane left Stockholm at 1 p.m.<sup>8</sup> Schönstedt drove to the airport in all his winter clothes. He had no luggage except a computer bag, where he always kept a toothbrush and clean underwear. And he always carried his passport with him. He arrived at Phuket Airport at 12-noon local time on Monday. Total chaos

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<sup>8</sup> According to Tommy Schönstedt.

reigned. There were no hire cars or helicopters. He persuaded a taxi to take him to the catastrophe area.

By Boxing Day afternoon, the following employees from the news media in the study were on their way to Southeast Asia:

- Sveriges Radio: Correspondent from Berlin via Frankfurt 2 p.m. to Phuket
- Dagens Nyheter: Reporter and photographer from Stockholm 2 p.m. to Phuket, reporter from Malmö 5 p.m. to Phuket.
- TV4: Reporter and photographer from Stockholm 2 p.m. to Phuket.
- Sveriges Television: Two reporters are delayed in Stockholm, miss the plane in Copenhagen at 2 p.m. and travel via Frankfurt later that day.
- Aftonbladet: Reporter and photographer from Copenhagen 2 p.m. to Phuket, reporter and photographer from Stockholm 2 p.m. to Phuket.
- Expressen: Reporter from Ho Chi Minh City at 8 a.m. (Swedish time), four employees from Malmö 5 p.m. to Phuket.

The tsunami catastrophe showed, in more than one way, the importance of mass media. Due to a failing organization at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the public was not able to reach the authorities and people in Sweden did not get information about missing relatives and friends. They therefore turned to and called the mass media newsrooms. But also, the mass media without doubt were the main channels for information to the Swedish public. Audience measurements showed that viewer ratings for SVT and TV4's scheduled news broadcasts increased by an average of 36 per cent during the first two weeks of the disaster.<sup>9</sup> In January 2005, *Aftonbladet's* circulation increased by 23 per cent and *Expressen's* by 9 per cent.<sup>10</sup> A summary shows that the number of unique visitors to the largest daily newspapers' online editions increased during the last week of 2004 by between 20 and 66 per cent.<sup>11</sup> Television was the largest news media in conjunction with the tsunami catastrophe. A total of 94 per cent of Swedes said they followed the course of events on television (Grandien, Nord & Strömback, 2005). Local press was the second most popular news source with 59 per cent. Many newspapers found local angles and wrote about people and families from their own distribution areas that were missing or affected in some way. The least utilized news media were the national press (23 per cent) and the Internet (24 per cent). There were probably also significant differences in how different age groups used the media.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The fundamental questions of all journalism are the five 'W's and the one 'H': *What* has happened? *Where* and *Who* is involved? *When* did it happen and *Why*? *How* did it happen? News reporting when crises or catastrophes occur is basically no different.

Research on editorial organization and news evaluation shows that news production in general follows the same editorial routines and professional ways of working in most western media. Of course, there are some variations in workflow depending on the kind of newspaper or broadcast station. For example, television reporting requires different technology and other

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<sup>9</sup> Source: MMS ([www.mms.se](http://www.mms.se), 9/30/05). Audience measurements for Aktuellt on SVT at 6 p.m. and 9 p.m., Nyheterna on TV4 at 7 p.m. (6.30) and 10 p.m., Rapport on SVT at 7:30 p.m. Aktuellt at 9 p.m. increased most with 68 per cent. Other programs had an increase of around 30 per cent.

<sup>10</sup> Source: TS-statistic ([www.ts.se](http://www.ts.se), 9/13/05)

<sup>11</sup> Source: Red Measure KIA-index ([www.mediacom.it-nott.se](http://www.mediacom.it-nott.se)). Increases were + 31% for ab.se, + 41% for dn.se, + 63% for expressen.se and + 66% for svd.se.

specialized skills than print journalism. But by and large the basics of all news journalism are the same: to evaluate what is newsworthy, and to choose which news to publish. What basically determines the news selection is how important and relevant events are to the media audience, i.e. the information it wants and needs to have.

International studies of news content have shown that the events that attract the media's attention and are published have many features in common. The news event usually occurs geographically and culturally close to the media audience, it is about politics, economy, crime or accidents, it involves some kind of societal elite, is sensational or dramatic, is about single individuals, contains negative elements, or is entertaining.

Subsequently, when crises or catastrophes occur, reporting in principle follows the same routines as always: reporters do research and write, photographers take the pictures, sources are checked, ethical considerations are made, and editors decide what to print and broadcast. But the pace and pulse in the newsroom is higher and the work more intense than usual. Also, large news events, as crises mostly are, require more staff and the re-allocation of both human and technical resources. The newsroom is in fact well prepared to deal with this kind of situations since it is basically organized to handle the unexpected and report on the unforeseen. Indeed, many journalists would say that the newsroom works at its best when exceptional events occur. The combination of routine and improvisation facilitates quick decisions and swift actions. Reporters are encouraged to be creative and to take initiatives as long as they serve editorial purposes and act within the limits of professional standards.

When a news flash reaches the newsroom saying that a crisis has occurred or is approaching, the first priority will be answer the first two 'W's: that is, to alert the public of what has happened, and where. The breaking news may be very short, e.g. only that a bomb has just exploded, or that a hurricane is drawing closer. Media will choose the quickest and most available channels; both newspapers and broadcast media will use their online editions, and television may also publish on the teletext. Furthermore, radio and television may consider interrupting ordinary programme schedules for a short news message or, in case of exceptionally serious events, going directly on air with live reporting. The latter was the case in many countries during the attack on the World Trade Centre in New York 9/11 2001. The decisions will differ from time to time depending on how big and serious the event, and on how much it affects the home audience.

Apart from the newsworthiness of the actual events, there are two additional factors that affect the attention a crisis gets in the news media. One is the size of the human and technical resources that the newsroom disposes of at the given time. Does it have enough staff to cover the event, at home and if necessary in other countries; is there an OB van available? Another issue is the individual media actor's position on the market. Are the competitors going directly on air with live reporting; are they sending correspondents to other countries; are they planning for extra editions? Sometimes competition triggers even more publishing and broadcasting than is really motivated by the public's interest in the news event.

In the first acute phase of crisis reporting, journalists will concentrate their efforts on seeking reliable information. At this stage facts and accounts from authorities are greatly requested by the media. According to some of the Swedish media representatives interviewed in this report, the authorities often release this kind of information later on, but seldom when it is most needed. To wait for the authorities' information before publishing or broadcasting is never an option in these cases. Instead, journalists will respond to the public's need of information by turning to other sources. It is in these situations that rumours and speculations easily appear: when the request for information is large but the supply of confirmed facts is poor. None of

the French media representatives reflect on this kind of problems. Rather, they report that authorities' spokesmen usually are very accessible. In the case of Radio France, it has direct access to all information deriving from this kind of sources since it participates together with the authorities in operational centres that are activated to deal with crises when they occur.

After the initial stage of a crisis, the reporting in general moves on to give a broader picture of the events. Hard facts are followed up with personal stories, analysis and commentary. The media turn to report on the total size of damages, whether errors were committed, and what the consequences will be. New contextualizations of the crisis often emerge, and the focus of attention shifts from the dramatic event itself to questions of liability, and to scrutiny of how authorities handle the situation.

Altogether, similarities are clearly more striking than differences when comparing how French and Swedish media respond to and report on crises and catastrophes. Regarding print newspapers no particular differences have been identified in this overview. The news production process is basically the same and the media regulation similar. When it comes to public service media, however, there are a few central discrepancies between the two countries.

Public service media in France are obliged to support communication and public information coming from the President (national level) or from prefects and regional governments (local level) in crisis situations. This means that public service media must broadcast all the declarations and communications that the authorities deem necessary. In addition, it even implies that authorities have the right to impede public service radio and television from broadcasting if they believe this better serves the public interest, e.g. in order to avoid panic in a crisis situation. Furthermore, the public service radio considers it as its role to a return to normality and to promote solidarity to the public.

In this aspect, the French government clearly exercises more control over the public service media than the Swedish government does. Swedish authorities have the right to demand from the public service radio that it broadcasts important announcements to the public, but this is done through the radio's Department of Public Announcements, not from the news department. No Swedish authority has any legal right to preview what news media will publish, or the right to impose on them what to publish or broadcast, not under any circumstances. This was strongly emphasised by all the interviewed Swedish editors. The Sveriges Radio editor even underlined that the radio takes no responsibility of any impact the news reporting may have on individuals or society. He clearly perceived the role of the media as completely independent of that of the authorities'.

In conclusion, this overview shows that the differences between how French and Swedish newsrooms organize their work and report on crises and catastrophes are not the result of professional standards and organization, like news evaluation or editorial routines. Rather, it is a question of how different national legislations regulate the independence of the public service media in relationship to authorities in separate ways. French public service media and authorities interact and cooperate on how to communicate to the public and what information to give when crises of catastrophes occur, whereas the Swedish counterparts act and make decisions one separate from the other. The means by which authorities control news media directly or indirectly affect the content of news reporting. Not in the sense that editors evaluate news differently or make completely other priorities, but rather so that they can impose on journalists a degree of self-censorship in the framing of crisis situations in order to be less controversial, politically or otherwise.

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