

Title of the project :

Popularity vs Quality: Do Social Media Bias Editorial Decisions?

Duration of the project :

2 years

Coordinator(s) of the project :

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Description of the project :

A large literature has examined **how access to information influences electoral outcomes**. For instance, a number of studies have shown that media access can raise political participation (Gentzkow et al. 2011; Strömberg 2004).¹ Most of the existing research has dealt with traditional media like newspapers, television and radio, with some recent evidence on the impact of the Internet (Falck et al. 2014; Campante et al. 2018; Gavazza et al. 2019). Only a few papers examine how social media affects voting (for a review of the literature, see Zhuravskaya et al. forthcoming).

Yet, **digital platforms** have deeply impacted not only the **way in which news is produced** but also **how we consume news**. While the Internet has transformed the way news is disseminated to the public, **the questions tackled by this research project are:**

1. How does news propagate online? And in particular, what are the mechanisms through which social media stories make it to the traditional media outlets?
2. Are news editors influenced in their editorial decisions by stories popularity on social media? And is there a trade-off between popularity and quality?

To answer these questions, this research project will rely on a **completely novel dataset** including a representative sample of all tweets produced in French from May 2018 to May 2021 and **all the content published online** by traditional media outlets during the same time period (the data are described in more details below). It will rely strongly on **interdisciplinarity**, with the input of two **Computer Scientists** (Nicolas Hervé and Béatrice Mazoyer from the *Institut National de l'Audiovisuel*) and the development of new **algorithms**. This project comes as natural continuation of a previous project carried out with researchers at the INA: "The Production of Information in an Online World" (Cagé, Hervé, and Viaud, *forthcoming*). This previous project was financed by the SAB ("Information Innovation in the Digital World" project) and is now forthcoming in the *Review of Economic Studies*.

¹ Excessive media fragmentation has also been shown to entail potentially negative effects on media quality and political participation (Cagé, *forthcoming*).