

Summary

This study critically explores the relationships amongst the global, national, continental and alternative news agencies in South Africa and in a changing global context of news. It revisits previous studies' findings on imbalances in global flows with a view to extending and updating these case studies. An extended-case study approach employing in-depth, open-ended interviews with news agency participants based primarily in South Africa and with the Pan African News Agency in Senegal is undertaken. The study postulates that news agencies do not operate independently of the broader external social environment. News agencies are influenced by changes in the global news environment and impacted upon by socio-economic, political and cultural processes and relations amongst nations. The main findings include firstly, that "intermediary changes" described as "adaptive strategies" at news agencies result from internal and external pressures on their operations of news production, selection and distribution. Internal pressures are identified as changes in ownership, and the gate-keeping function in the selection and exchange of news. External pressures are associated with the processes and relations of market-based global capitalism, which, it is theorized, gives rise to changing conditions described as a new phase of neo-liberal globalisation. Another finding related to the first, describes the adaptive strategies at news agencies as signifying a crisis in the global capitalist order and a transition to a post-industrial society. This post-industrial society presents the space for further investigation of the phenomenon of global consciousness, which is a further finding of the study. The prevalence of an alternative form of news production, citizens' journalism, is seen as an example of an emerging public realm of opinion making, or, the public sphere. The study concludes that explanations for the persistence of imbalances in global news flows in the relationships among news agencies needs revision and updating, and that a global phenomenon, "global consciousness", presents a challenge to the extreme market forces and the statist government control over media systems worldwide.

Key Words

Global news and information flows, news exchange agreements, Reuters, Agence France-Presse, Associated Press, Deutsche Presse-Agentur, Inter Press Service, South African Press Association, Pan African News Agency, globalisation, post-industrial society, citizens and public journalism, global consciousness.