



The media in Morocco: a highly political economy, the case of the paper and on-line press since the early 1990s

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The media in Morocco: a highly political economy, the case of the paper and on-line press since the early 1990s

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Existing international academic articles compare the situation of media in Morocco, either to post-USSR media, with a mix of control and private investment with no impact on the power structure, or to southern Europe post-dictatorship media, with weak professionalisation and strong intervention of the state not to establish rules but to develop economic clientelism. Considering the lack of research material on Morocco, this paper looks at the complex configuration of press companies, their historical, economic and political context, and analyse power interactions and media actors' strategies and profiles.

The main fieldwork is focused on privately owned newspapers, news magazines and pure players (entities constrained uniquely to the virtual sphere), born since the mid-1990s as (a) the political economy of press companies, (b) surrounding oligopolies, organisations and modes of economic control, as well as (c) the sociography of press owners and managers.

In spite of (and perhaps because of) the importance of what is at stake, scientific research on news media in Morocco, and in particular the changes they have been going through since the 1990s, remains very limited. In fact, although the history of the Moroccan press has been the subject of several studies (e.g. Miège 1954; Aouchar 1990; Baida 1996) as has television (Zaid 2009; Campaiola 2014; Gaaaybess 2015), contemporary debates have been poorly studied with the exception of participant testimonies (Daoud 2007; Alaoui 2012; Bensmaïn 2015), reports by international organisations (ACRLI 2005; Open Society Foundation 2011), or debates which are sometimes stimulating but not based on investigations (El Ayadi 2006).¹ This explains a certain normativity of this literature, often limited to measuring the level of 'democratisation' of the Moroccan media. Furthermore, other dominant theoretical approaches do not help us to describe the complexity of press businesses, their operational methods and the issues at stake vis-à-vis the

powers in place. For example, works on transitology tend to be evolutionist, believing in possible 'progress' and in changes which accompany any unavoidable 'democratic transition'. The notion of hybridity is equally promoted by certain analysts (Belghazi 2005; Chadwick 2013) as an alternative, as it could enable us to study the way various national political systems work in countries such as Morocco.

Far from relying on these far too often excessively normative, general or ethnocentric interpretation frameworks, this research² intends to analyse the Moroccan journalistic field since the 1990s using a relational sociology looking at its news businesses and showing their strong dependence on the economic and political fields. This relational perspective makes reference, on the one hand, to the works on the theory of fields, initiated by Pierre Bourdieu (for the media, see Benson and Neveu 2005 in particular) and, on the other hand, those focusing on the political economy of the media (e.g. Tunstall and Palmer 1991; Wasko, Murdock, and Sousa 2011). This work also relies on the theory of economist Albert Otto Hirschman in *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* (1970), as it enables us to question the supposedly rational behaviour of the various stakeholders concerning their interaction with the economic players, the powers involved and the marketplace. To summarise, the concept of fields are useful when considering a structural frame in order to, on the one hand, sketch out the relative positions of agents and institutions in the journalistic profession in Morocco, and, on the other, to reproduce the close relationship between this space and the social, political and economic universes. The second set of sources serve as the locus of inspiration when trying to understand the economic and political logic at work regarding the way the 'Press companies' operate in Morocco (Benchenna 2016, 45–49). This work also relies on the theory expressed by the economist Albert Otto Hirschman in his book, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* (1970), as it enables us to question the supposedly rational behaviour of the various stakeholders concerning their interaction with the economic players, the powers involved and the marketplace.

This initial analysis of the paper and electronic non-specialised press³ (and its managers) is based on five main issues. The first addresses the history of the non-partisan press and the social, political protest issues within it since Independence. The second illustrates the explosive expansion in the volume of news represented by the press since the 1990s, and thereafter, by the electronic press (notably since 2011), but underscores that this multiplication of titles should itself not hide historically consistent features that characterise this universe. The third issue describes the market in which the press companies operate and which occupies a positional *continuum* located between two poles: the *hanout* (The grocery store) and the media conglomerate (and the careers of their senior executives). This also shows that the sustainability of publications depends on a balance between political

and economic parameters, and certain un-crossable 'red lines' (Monarchy, Western Sahara and Islam). The fourth issue focuses on the very direct impact which the advertising oligopoly, closely connected to the main powers, has on the working of the press industry. Lastly, the Moroccan transformations in social space enable us to articulate why the Moroccan press is facing difficulties when trying to expand its audience.

Genesis of a non-partisan press: introducing 'critical' news

In Morocco, the subservience of the journalistic sphere to the power of the centre remains very strong but has changed considerably since the 1990s, that is, since the end of the Cold War and the end of the reign of Hassan II.

After Independence in 1956, the press structure was moulded by being attached in the main to authorised political parties, and, until 1971, by the French group Mas, publisher of *Le Petit Marocain* and *La Vigie Marocaine*, with direct authority of the monarchy (Tiers and Ruf 1975; El Ayadi 2006). The Maroc Soir Group continued with this 'official' press system thereafter, publishing the daily *Le Matin*. The national press agency, Maghreb Arabe Presse (MAP), was established in 1959 (Mouhtadi 2008, 76sq), as well as the state-controlled radio stations and television channels. Furthermore, up to the 1990s, censorship was not only very direct but the information from government press outlets was considered, in the main, very unreliable, closely monitored and favouring comment over reportage, in the tradition of a literary and opinion press (Hidass 2016).

However, this subservience of the news world to the political and state authorities in Morocco has varied widely, depending both on the period and on the media type (Ksikes 2014). After Independence, dissent was available in cultural and intellectual Arabic and French-language publications and magazines played a significant role in public debates up to the early 1970s (as mentioned by Daoud 2007; Sefrioui 2012; Fernández Parrilla 2014): *Lamalif* (1966–1988), *Souffles* (1966–1971), *Al Asas* (1977–1995) and *Kalima* (1986–1989). Yet, other non-partisan publications (very few in number) experienced censorship by the authorities, such as the daily *Maroc Informations* (1960–1966) which focused mostly on economics; the left-leaning weekly *Al Balagh Al Maghribi* (1981–1984); and, perhaps not surprisingly, several satirical publications (*Akhbar Souk*, 1975–1981 and *Al Houdhoud*, 1981–1982). Mustafa Alaoui, a journalist and founder of *Al Ousboue* (1965), is the exception that perhaps proves the rule, as he managed to last by changing, after each ban or censorship, the title of the publication registered under his name (Alaoui 2012).

Beginning in the late 1980s, the convergence of two processes, first, increased international requirements linked, among other aspects, to human rights and, second, a more liberal economy in Morocco, led Moroccan political leaders to gradually realise (Bennani-Chraïbi 1997) that they needed

to develop an image of a country progressing towards 'liberal modernity'. Other developments contributed to this trend: the fall of the Soviet bloc; the Franco-African summit in La Baule which brought to an end the support previously offered by French diplomacy to dictatorships, and required Morocco to improve its 'democratic shop window'; the first Gulf War marked, in Morocco, by King Hassan II giving support to a foreign intervention (and perceived in Morocco as a 'sign of weakness'); the general strike of December 1990 organised by the unions CDT (La Confédération Démocratique du Travail) and UGTM (Union Générale des Travailleurs du Maroc) and the release, in 1990, of Gilles Perrault's *Notre Ami le Roi* (*Our friend the King*), the first book to criticise the monarchy, which had a tremendous impact. The debate that ensued included discussion of a 'Democratic transition', intended to attract foreign investments and tourists (Hibou and Tozy 2002), and 'Freedom of the press'.

At the beginning of the 1990s, a new generation of non-partisan press titles, notably focusing on public affairs, emerged; two new weeklies *L'Économiste* and *Maroc Hebdo International* (1991) were launched, while the existing *La Vie Éco* was acquired by a French press baron, Jean-Louis Servan-Schreiber, the head of the L'Expansion Group. *La Vie Éco*, which would be sold again in 1997, employed several figures that would go on to become the celebrity editor/writers of the so-called 'independents' (in contrast to the existing phalanx of 'partisan press'): among them Ali Amar, Ahmed Benchemsi, Aboubakr Jamaï and Ali Lmrabet. This experience was not only one of the first testing beds for political and economic reporting in Morocco but signalled the first signs of a press that could be designed and run on entrepreneurial principles. Undoubtedly, the focus of opportunity was on economic reporting. The good news came in the form of economic information, which was why everyone turned to the economy, because politically you could not say anything, it was not possible', explains a former journalist of *La Nouvelle Tribune* (personal communication).

But it was in the creation of political weeklies, *Le Journal* and *Assahifa* (Benslimane 2015), launched respectively in 1997 and 2000, and then *TelQuel* in 2001, that a press challenging the institutional and political context and the monarchy resurfaced. In some ways, it seemed as if political liberation followed economic liberation. According to several interviews with former managers of *Journal* and *TelQuel* (October 2015; April 2016), this momentum had in fact been encouraged by several counsellors and/or advisers at the Royal Palace, which led some newspaper editors to allow themselves more freedom, notably to transform the 'reputation of Morocco abroad' after the 'Years of Lead' (a label for the repressive years under Hassan II) and to prepare the King's succession. This phase was an opportunity for a new generation of journalists who gained freedom from the tutelage of partisan newspapers. They were actively involved in both iconic enterprises as well as in the

daily *Al Ahdath Al Maghribia* (established 1998), the weekly *Al Ayam* (established 2001) both of which continue to publish, and, in *Al Jarida Al Oukhra* (2004–2006). However, the aspiration to change the profession's practices had no legal status, as shown by an upsurge in the number of trials and the increase in economic pressure on their companies from 2003 on. The new Arab language dailies famous for being 'professional' and politically 'liberal' (*Al Massae* launched in 2007, *Akhbar Al Yaoum* in 2009) have also been subjected to repression by the authorities, apparently worried by their growing readership and, hence, influence (Cohen 2011, 261).

The result has been that alternative political voices have moved gradually towards web news sites. In fact, the Arab uprisings in several countries with a majority of Arabic-speaking people, including Morocco, where a new constitution was promulgated in 2011, accelerated the explosion in the supply of digital news: 'Here in Morocco, the reader of information on the internet was not a newspaper reader, because we had at most 300,000 readers a day, for all titles, while now we have almost 9 million online readers', observed the director of a weekly magazine (personal communication with authors). Many digital sites have been created by former journalists of the written press, during or in the months preceding the appearance of 'the February 20th Movement'. This was the case, for instance, of several Arabic online platforms such as *Lakome* (Aboubakr Jamaï, co-founder of *Le Journal* and Ali Anouzla previously of *Al Jarida Al Oukhra*, *Al Jarida Al Aoula* and *al Massae*), *Goud* (Ahmed Najim of *Nichane*) and *Febrayer* (Maria Moukrim of *Al Ayam*). This growth in the publications of alternative views took different shapes and led very quickly to the erection of numerous firewalls: the launching of web platforms by factions linked to the authorities who realised what was really at stake inside and outside the country; legal proceedings against several webmasters, a political and legal reshuffle of the nature of news coverage via a complete overhaul of the 'Press Code' in 2016 and a strengthening of monitoring measures. In 2013, Ali Anouzla, editor of the Arabic edition of the news site *Lakome* was jailed by the Royal Prosecutor for 'material support', 'advocating' and 'inciting others to carry out terrorist acts', after publishing a link to a propaganda video from Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. This site (French and Arabic versions) was then closed before reappearing in 2014 under a new name, *Lakome 2*, with very limited resources.⁴

Structuring of the Moroccan news media: a huge increase in supply? or a 'trompe l'œil'?

Struggling publications and a limited news world

One only has to look at what the newsstands offer in Morocco's major cities, or to visit Moroccan-generated news websites to realise that there are many

publications on offer and that there is some apparent political pluralism, notwithstanding the unbreachable 'red lines'. In fact, in 2014, the Minister for Communication identified 488 newspapers (including 15 partisan publications, and 171 'independent' regional newspapers) and 500 national, regional and local news websites. However, these raw data tend first to hide the considerable financial difficulties the Moroccan press is facing as shown by the publications' high 'mortality rate', and second, a drastic decline in the paper press distribution numbers, which were already very weak in a struggling advertising market (Naji 2011). On the other hand, in certain cases, the number of paid readership rose.

The period of focus here from 2004 to 2012, for which a degree of variability exists in the data. The time spent (for all printed media: books, newspapers, etc.), in 2011/2012, did not exceed 2 minutes per day for the population aged 15 and over.⁵ The audit company KPMG (2011) added that, in 2008, distribution accounted for only 10 copies per 1000 inhabitants. Morocco is often depicted as one of the mainly Arab-speaking countries with the smallest press readerships (Zaid and Ibahrine 2011, 29). The total paying readership for the 36 newspapers in Morocco,⁶ as recorded by the OJD (l'Office de Justification de la Diffusion), an organisation auditing distribution, declined, in constant terms⁷ from 87.4 million copies to 61.9 million copies between 2009 and 2014. Yet, the 2004–2008 period specifically was fruitful, in that it showed a strong increase in the number of news weeklies (from 5 to 18), news magazines (6 to 19) and paying readership (+160.13% for the weeklies and +72.5% for the magazines). There are similar complex trends in the daily newspaper sector, whereas the number of paid subscriptions nearly tripled after the early 2000s, rising from 116,358 copies in 2004 to 300,871 in 2008. Moreover, during the same period, which witnessed higher indulgence of critical voices and an opening of the market to private enterprise, the number of publications increased five-fold. This period is remembered for its large readership of the Arabic dailies, when *Al Massae* and *Akhbar El Yaoum*, were first published, years in which there was still no challenge from the electronic data sites. This changed in 2009, when overall daily total readership dropped from 250,296 copies in 2009 to 175,760 in 2014.

The data on Moroccan news websites demonstrate, on the one hand, that these new 'pure' platforms are indisputably much more successful (by number of visits) than the platforms associated with paper news, which, in a country where the percentage of Internet users was only slight above half, 56.8%, in 2014, becomes even more astonishing.⁸ A survey carried out in 2015⁹ on a specific sample of the national literate population aged 15 and older confirmed that 67% of respondents state that they read the digital press, versus only 17% for the paper press and 26% reading both types of platforms. Furthermore, the prevalent profile of web press readers in Morocco seems to differ widely from that of the paper press: more female oriented (73% of

women state that they read the electronic news press, versus only 8% for paper-based news) and younger (79% of 15–24-year-old read the electronic news press, versus 8% for the paper press). As of 30 August 2016, Alexa states that the most widely visited platforms were Moroccan Arabic news websites. Most popular was *Hespress*, with 2.5 million visitors per day, ranking fourth, after *Google*, *Facebook* and *Youtube*. Next was *Chouftv* (5th), followed by two football websites (*elbotola.com* and *andkhoora.com* [9th and 11th, respectively]). Other general websites have become popular as well, such as, for instance, the bilingual site *le 360* (13th) and several Arabic activist sites *Goud* (14th), *Alyaoum24* (19th), *Febrayer* (31st) and *Hibapress* (34th).

Notwithstanding this exponential increase in paper and digital platforms, it is important to note that journalists in Morocco remain a poorly trained and part of a very limited microcosm (with 2130 journalists accredited by the Ministère de la Communication in 2012) closely structured around the most official national media. Indeed, nearly half (46.9%) of the accredited professionals work for state audio-visual media companies – either in public television or radio, or at MAP (10.28%).¹⁰ In sum, although the plethora of new publications that appeared under the aegis of liberalisation suggested a freer media landscape, it acted as a *trompe l'oeil* for a market that instead was characterised by fragmentation; meanwhile, the government monopoly of the big news-producing entities remained intact, as did its role as the largest employer in the sector.

Domination of the Arabic language and the general national daily press

But it is the structure of the Moroccan news sector, which is closely related to the unique characteristics of the social national landscape, that enables us to move away from this *trompe l'œil*. Yet, it too reveals, initially, a paradox related to Morocco's national political history: Arabic, although it is the most read, remains the least commercially profitable; conversely, the press written in French attracts the major share of commercial investment. Arabic took a long time before emerging because it was very severely sanctioned first by the French protectorate (just 5% of newspapers were in Arabic in 1951; as stated by Baida 1996, 18) and then by the authorities for several decades after Independence. The opposition between these two languages is mostly due to the structure of the public sphere. The paper publications were designed for a very limited fraction of the social space, namely the rich, in terms of cultural capital and economic resources, that is, for a very long time, that section of the population that was French-speaking. The Moroccan peculiarity is that neither standard Arabic nor French, the two main languages taught at school and used in both the paper-based and electronic press, is the mother tongue of most Moroccan students, but instead Darija or in some

districts, Amazigh. The eventual domination of standard Arabic as a spoken and written language was very gradual: the percentage of publications in Arabic (57.4%) versus French (42.6%), was almost equal in 1985.¹¹ Figures for 2014 show that the relationship had changed considerably, Arabic publications having risen to 70.9% compared to just 19% in French; 6.6% in both Arabic and French, 2.5% in another language (English, Spanish) and only 1% in Amazigh. The domination of Arabic is obvious on electronic platforms.

The printed and electronic press in Arabic experienced an unprecedented expansion in the years between the late 1990s and early 2000s. If we consider the dailies, two of them are the embodiment of popular press development (both in the meaning of liked by many, and as representing a common taste), even if their readership, according to an interview with a former senior executive of *Al Massae*, who now works at *Al Akhbar* (personal communication October 2015), is found in higher social classes. The daily *Al Massae* was founded by two widely read Arabic-speaking journalists (Taoufik Bouachrine and Rachid Niny) and a former banker with a new career in journalism (Samir Chaouki) and mostly financed by the cinema director-producer Mohamed Asli. The daily *Al Akhbar* was created by Rachid Niny after leaving *Al Massae*. Both managed within two years to build a considerable readership (114,458 paid copies in 2008 for *Al Massae* and 60,000 as measured in 2014 for *Al Akhbar*). This success is in part due to the many readers of the daily column '*Chouft'chouf*' ('Who knows') written by Rachid Niny in a mix of standard and Moroccan Arabic which increased sales at the first daily he contributed to, *Assabah*, and then continued in other publications whose development he was involved in, *Al Massae* and *Al Akhbar*.¹² Using his column to denounce corruption, and social injustice, including within government circles, and to publish several 'scoops', he acquired a high profile. Though a true phenomenon, Niny fits a tradition of highly popular opinion writers in the Arabic press, who at any given time have brought thousands of readers to their pages. This is less the case for the French-language press; the biggest, the 'official' general daily *Le Matin* and the specialised *L'Économiste* have been relatively stable since the early 2000s with about 20,000 copies for the former, and 16,000–18,000 for the latter.

Another structural principle of the Moroccan newspaper world is related to the dominance of the national press. Though there are regional publications (23.7% of the papers published in 2005), they are characterised by problematic durability and the sector remains highly concentrated in the economic capital of Casablanca, and, to a lesser degree, the political capital of Rabat. Only 5.4% of the journalists holding a current professional press card in 2005 were working for the regional press (Annual report on the written press and the public audio-visual media, Ministère de la Communication, AQ3 2005). Similarly, the Moroccan press sector is largely based on dailies, and

the distribution of magazines is relatively limited.¹³ Two publications are icons of the 'independent press' in French but never had a significant readership: *Le Journal* only twice in its history sold over 20,000 copies a week, in 1999 and 2000, whereas *TelQuel*, though used to sell a weekly average of 20,435 copies in 2005, has been in gradual decline since 2009, selling only 10,376 copies per week in 2014.

From the 'grocery store' to the press conglomerate

For the researcher, one of the challenges in fully understanding the press sector in Morocco is linked to shareholder analysis, the identification of the shareholders of a given publication being the first obstacle: either because the publishing company has no legal entity (as is the case of several news websites), or because it may have been created by the 'authorities' or of being discreetly supported by a politician, a senior official or a businessman. The statistics published by the Minister for Communication aim to emphasise 'pluralism' and to reviewing the 'current state of the efforts to promote the freedom of the press in Morocco', but they do not give any information on the editorial lines followed or on a range of features required to fully understand the press sector in Morocco, such as the economic structure of the sector, or the nature of the various editorial structures for all publications, and certainly not the profile of the owners or the relationship between the owners and the political and economic authorities. Therefore, the second obstacle that arises is to identify the professional career of investors. While not pretending to be exhaustive, the field investigations in progress were able to identify several main profiles of press investors.

Portraits of media investors

Media investors and owners arrive at the position of publishing magnate from a variety of paths. The main categories include journalists, academics, corporate owners or heirs, members of the artistic and advertising communities, party leaders and members of the Makhzen (the Court).

Many owners or original investors are journalists and media professionals. Their role is rarely limited to the financial investment aspect, as they often hold the title of Publishing Director and/or Editorial Director. As a result of professional setbacks, that might include economic problems encountered by their backers, criminal convictions for publishing material against the sensibilities of the authorities, or disagreements with associates, some have started several publications in succession. Such has been the case of Ali Anouzla, Taoufiq Bouachrine or Rachid Niny.

Academics constitute a second category of lead investor/owners, especially in the economic press. For instance, Abdelmounaïm Dilami has been a

professor of law at the University of Rabat and president and chief executive officer since 1991 of the *Éco-Médias* Group, a conglomerate which consists of the biggest French daily (*L'Économiste*), the third largest Arabic daily based on copies published (*Assabah*), Radio Atlantica, a graduate school of journalism and communication, as well as the printing company Eco-print. Fahd Yata, founder of the business weekly *La Nouvelle Tribune* in 1995, was professor at the School of Law and Political Science of the Mohammed V University, Rabat, and still lectures at the Centre d'études stratégiques (Centre for strategic studies). Yata has a doctorate in international relations from the Paris 1 University and has been lecturing at the Hassan II University since 1979. Both started investing in the business press during a period of unprecedented economic liberalisation.

Fahd Yata illustrates the third type of media mogul as well, the heir, as do Aboubakr Jamaï and Abdelmalek Alaoui. Fahd Yata's father, Ali Yata, was director of *Al Bayane* (the mouthpiece for the Progrès et Socialisme party). Aboubakr Jamaï is the son of Khalid Jamaï, journalist and former member of the Istiqlal party political bureau. Graduate of a Moroccan business school (ISCAE), he also holds an MBA from the Oxford University as well as a Master's degree in Public Administration from the Harvard Kennedy School and, in 1997, became one of the founders of the weekly *Le Journal*. Abdelmalek Alaoui is the son of Ahmed Alaoui, former minister and Grand-Vizir of Hassan II, and president of the *Maroc Soir* group.

The third category of media magnate is the company director and/or a businessman/minister. This is the case of Moulay Hafid El Alamy, founder of the *Saham Assurance* group and Minister for Industry, Commerce, Investment and Digital Economy since 2013. Titled (as indicated by the honorific 'Moulay'), he is one of the richest men in Africa and the main shareholder of the business daily *Les Inspirations Éco* (founded in 2009) and of the monthly specialising in contemporary history, *Zamane*.¹⁴ He is also a shareholder of the *Éco Médias* group. The latter manages the *Caractères* group, producing, among other publications, the weekly *La Vie Éco* and the monthly *Femmes du Maroc*. Another case is Aziz Akhannouch, president of the *Akwa* group, which specialises in energy and real estate, and Minister for Fisheries and Agriculture since 2007. Both these cases illustrate the 'economisation of politics', to quote Catusse (2008, 37). In reality, for these businessmen, owning media has less to do with a love of publishing, and much more to do with three key political drivers: investing in the press sector is intended to protect their own commercial interests, to support a stable political world by using their many titles in support of political communication, and to add business competence as one of the qualities required to become an established politician.

Two other important business figures must be added to this list of media magnates: Khalid El Hariry, former MP for the USPF (Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires) party and a company manager; and Karim Tazi, manager

of the *Richbond* group (furniture, chemical industry, real estate, etc.). They became joint shareholders, in 2013, of *TelQuel Media*, the new trade name of the company publishing *TelQuel*, the first magazine in French originally launched in 2001 by Ahmed Réda Benchemsi a shareholder of *Presse directe*. Since the end of 2013, Khalid El Hariry became the sole shareholder of *TelQuel Media*, after Tazi withdrew. The case of Khalid El Hariry is representative of a new trend. Since the late 2000s, investors such as El Hariry have entered the electronic press sector, using their own technical know-how while surrounding themselves with editorially competent partners able to manage publication content. Mhamed Lakbir (of *Hibapress*), the brothers Hassan and Amine Guennouni (of *Hespress*) and Mohamed Ezzouak (of *Yabladî*) (Benchenna 2014), all initially designed their sites as content aggregators but are in fact managing today three of the most visited and popular Moroccan news platforms.

A fourth category of media manager derives from the artistic world. Aziz Daki, joint shareholder of the *Edit Holding* group, manages the French and Arabic information portal, *360*, the richest in human and material resources, while being a joint founder of the *L'atelier 21* art gallery and artistic director of the international festival *Mawazine* (started in 2001 by Mounir Majidi, private secretary to Mohamed VI and senior executive of *First Contact Communication*, a company specialising in advertising billboards across Morocco). This casts serious doubt, particularly in this profession, as to the real identity of the other shareholder of the *Edit Holding* group.

Advertisers and communication professionals constitute a fifth category. Unlike journalists, they successfully build media groups consisting of newspapers, magazines, 'pure players',¹⁵ and now, even private radios. The most salient examples include Kamal Lahlou, founder of the *New Publicity* group, which is organised around three poles: press (*VH Magazine*, *Challenge* and *Lalla Fatéma*), radio (MFM Radio and the regional network MFM) and urban billboards. His two sons are positioning themselves, through education and in-house experience, to eventually take over the company. Ahmed Charaï, another in this category, owns the *Global Media Holding* group, which consists of the weekly *L'Observateur du Maroc et d'Afrique*, the daily *Al Ahdath Al Maghribia* (bought from former stakeholders), the quarterly *Pouvoirs d'Afrique*, Med Radio and the information website *Kifache.com*.¹⁶ Others include Mohamed Laraki, who manages the *Geomédia* group;¹⁷ and importantly, the advertiser Karim Bennani,¹⁸ and his politician-businessman partner, Ilyas El Omari, General Secretary of the Makhzen-supported PAM (the Party of Authenticity and Modernity). Bennani manages the digital communication agency Marshall-mallow Digital, but critically, is the majority shareholder of the press group *Akhir Saâ*, which was launched by El Omari, with a capital of 40 million dirhams (ca. \$4 million) in late 2015. *Akhir Saâ* has six Arabic, French and Amazigh publications: an Arabic daily (*Akhir Saâ*), a French weekly

(*La Dépêche*), a website (*qoushk.ma*), three monthlies (*Likouli Nissae*, *Afkar* and *Tafoukt*) and a printing company, Prestigia Print. According to *le Desk.ma* (18 October 2016), Bennani, intends to restructure the group by separating the editorial activities from manufacturing operations. For his part, Ilyas El Omari represents the return of a more traditional image, in the press, of a politician-businessman and head of a political party (and close to the throne). Apart from the majority of very partisan publications managed by party leaders, his case is probably the more iconic.

Requirements for durability: respect of 'red lines' and managerial competence

The press sector is very political in Morocco, as illustrated by the different editorial lines adopted by the country's many publications. The managerial competency of any given publication's leadership team is the determining factor of its durability (as indeed it is in any economy, but particularly in Morocco due to the nuance required in managing the constraints set by the Court and the Monarch). This was the conclusion reached after interviewing the top management of a range of media companies. Since the early 2000s, control is exerted less and less by direct censure and increasingly via economic suffocation of publications following an editorial line displeasing to the political authorities. Advertisers (state and private companies close to the authorities) are directed to boycott them and not to carry their publicity campaigns. The leaderships of three newspapers are convinced that their publications 'disappeared' because of this type of economic control: the *Journal Hebdomadaire* in January 2010, *Al Jarida Al Oula* in May 2010 and *Nichane* in October 2010. Some newspapers are also targeted by shareholders close to the authorities, who will exert pressure on the editorial line. This is illustrated by the takeover of the *Caractères* group, in 1997, by the businessman Abdelaziz Akhannouch.

Accusations of mismanagement and tax evasion are other tools often used to stifle a publication. In one particular case, *Média Trust* and the *Trimédia* group, which respectively published *Le Journal* and *Journal Hebdomadaire*, were officially found guilty in 2010, of non-payment of debts owed to the Caisse Nationale de Sécurité Sociale (CNSS), the tax administration services and several banks. 'Poor management' of these publishing entities was the excuse used to legally terminate this famous weekly, which, according to their founders: 'was giving nightmares, on a weekly basis, to the Alaouite'¹⁹ regime' (Amar 2009, 15). *Le Journal* was seized in April 2000 after publishing an interview of the leader of the Front Polisario, a blatant transgression of one of the three 'red lines', in this case relating to the Western Sahara. Several months later, it was banned by a decree issued by the socialist Prime Minister Abderrahman Youssoufi.

This explains why the practical evolution in the press sector has been marked, in the last 10 years, by an entrenchment, but likewise a growing sophistication, in the practice of self-censorship. Endeavouring to develop their companies in a shrinking environment, the senior press executives manage their relationship with the current authorities through various methods: the first consists of searching for, in a quasi-systematic way, 'sponsors', 'guarantors' and other allies in order to obtain easier access to the markets and protect themselves from unexpected or miscalculated political blows; the second is linked to international alliances; the third to identifying and appealing to a large audience to counter political power and provide economic guarantees.

A poorly structured sector dominated by small entities

The use of and dependency on economic and political constraints by the authorities to rein in the sector partly explains the domination of the sector by small enterprises (small number of employees and low assets). In 2008, a survey of 42 companies revealed that the assets of 23 of them is less than 10 million dirhams (ca. \$1 million) and only 4 companies had assets exceeding 50 million dirhams, equivalent of about \$5 million – a situation that has changed slightly since then with El Omari successfully and quickly creating a press group at the end of 2015 (KPMG 2011). The university professor Abdelmounaïm Dilami developed the *Éco Médias* Group, and the media professional Ahmed Charaï launched the *Global Media Holding* Group, formerly called *Med Éditions*. The success of all three is due not in little part to the fact that they are close to various entities in power, and that the editorial line of their publications centres on economic topics, and are designed to promote, rather than jeopardise the economic, political and social order. The few others in this rarefied territory today would likely include the Lahlou Media Group in Casablanca, Aziz Akhanoush and Moulay Hafid's media holdings, although financial data are not available on these companies, and financial reporting remains a contested area in a country in which the shadowy business dealings of the Makhzen conspire to elude economic transparency. Other attempts to create press groups failed because their approach to the market was more circumspect. Ahmed Réda Benchemsi, who started Presse Directe (parent of *TelQuel* and *Nichane*), and Aboubakr Jamaï, director of Media Trust (*Le Journal* and *Assahifa*), having attempted to publish in various different ways, but at last decided it was fruitless and chose instead to become exiles.

The political will to structure this sector?

In addition to being highly fragmented, the press sector is also poorly structured. Some companies have legally existed for over 10 years. Yet, a

substantial number of companies, mostly *pure players*, currently are in limbo, having been waiting for some time for official recognition by the relevant minister and joint committee. Moreover, of the 488 newspapers listed by the Minister for Communication, in 2014, only 10 non-partisan national dailies (7 in Arabic and 3 in French), 22 weeklies (10 in Arabic and 12 in French) and 25 monthlies (12 in French and 13 in Arabic) actually employ journalists.²⁰ A similar situation pertains in the news websites: only 23 of the 5000 listed employ journalists. Up to the mid-2000s, some newspaper owners thought about this sector organisation in terms of publication and very rarely as businesses, although this notion duly appears in the 1958 Press Code, (articles 5, 13 and 15) (see note 20). Today, that has changed.

In 2004, the King invited the government to work on 'promoting the emergence of professional media companies'.²¹ This decision resulted, for the written press, in the creation of the joint committee and two quadrennial contract programmes (in 2005, with an amendment in 2009 and in 2013). Co-signed by the FMEJ (Fédération Marocaine des Éditeurs de Journaux) and the Communications Minister, the stated objective was 'the promotion and modernisation of the written press' and 'helping it to upgrade'.

These two texts resulted in grants given to a raft of newspaper publishing companies: 46.4 million dirhams shared between 40 titles as opposed to 54 in 2011 and 71 in 2012, with grants totalling 56 million dirhams (Ministère de la Communication, 2012). However, the beneficiaries of this help had to meet very specific requirements, which drastically reduced the number of applicants: to obtain a registration number from the joint committee; to satisfy the requirements of the tax authorities; to regularise the situation vis-à-vis the CNSS; to pay at least the minimum wages required; to be transparent as regards the number of printed copies distributed to publish the annual balance sheet; to supply evidence for expenses and to make sure that the company employs at least the minimum number of salaried journalists. This contract programme states that the 'publication or the written press company must employ, as a minimum, one Editor in Chief, seven professional journalists and seven employees for the dailies; one Editor in Chief, four professional journalists and five employees for the weeklies'. These requirements are subject to discussions, at regular intervals.

An article published by the *Goud*²² site indicated that a number of publications had benefited from this help without having to ask for it. Another article, published in *Hespress*²³ (<http://www.hespress.com/medias/50941.html>), questioned the eligibility of the beneficiaries to access this help, as well as the amounts thus granted. It describes, among others, the weekly published by Mustapha Alaoui, manager of *Al Ousboue Assahafi*, who received 1 million dirhams, although he had no publishing company and no stable editorial team, until a few years after the arrival of Mustapha El Khalfi at the Ministry of Communications (2012) (interview with the authors, October 2015).

These statements question the leeway the Minister has to structure this sector, improve the professionalisation of this field and ensure that the press is 'independent' of the political authority.

In 2016, a grant of 12 million dirhams over two years was paid directly to card-carrying journalists; this started a debate within the profession. Although the Minister stated that it was intended to 'improve the social status of print journalists', a number of professionals in the field have expressed concern at being paid directly through the Ministry of Communications; in February 2016, they asked for the publication of a new collective agreement as soon as possible.²⁴

The financial help given by the State to the non-partisan paper and web press since 2015 has become an issue for publishing companies that face financial difficulties and ever-diminishing sales figures. This is even more serious for Arabic publications, as their advertising income is less than that of the French publications (Groupement des annonceurs du Maroc 2014).

Where does the money come from (the game of mutual accusations)?

The press sector is also very political, as shown by the permanent game of mutual accusations. Professionals in this field, as well as politicians, ask frequent questions about the true shareholders of some publications. They make some accusations, most of them discreet, by stating that one publication or another is in fact 'acting' on behalf of a political party or a politician, or even the secret services. Some even deny that there is such a thing as an 'independent press'. For example, Rachid Niny recently accused businessman Karim Tazi of being the main shareholder of a pure player, *Alaoual.com*, launched in January 2016 by former journalists of the daily *Al Massae*, and including its publication director Soulaïman Raïssouni. The latter in turn accused Niny, while serving his jail sentence in 2011, of having negotiated his release by promising to create *Al Akhbar*, with a brief dictated by the political authorities, and with only one objective, to attack the ruling PJD, led by Abdel-Ilah Benkirane.²⁵

Sometimes, these accusations will question the legality of the money invested in the press. The Benkirane, the Prime Minister has asked the secretary general of the PAM (Parti Authenticité et Modernité), El Omari, to reveal the origin of the 60 million dirhams invested in the media group Akhir Saâ, created at the end of 2015. The intertwining relationships between politicians and businessmen are now so strong that the frontier up to now clearly set between party newspapers and newspapers 'independent from political parties' is becoming blurred.

The different financing modes

Two main economic models can be identified as most commonly used to launch and sustain both printed and online press entities. The first is financing

through discreet and unverifiable funding sources (interviewees mentioned the intelligence services, individuals who choose to remain anonymous, etc.) and is usually for tabloids, newspapers and pure players that tend to follow a non-partisan though biased line. These press entities often will specialise in smear campaigns, and yet are rarely, if ever, subject to any judicial or political pressure.

The second significant model is occupied by very few press companies that have published, from the outset, the names of their shareholders, of which there are often very many. This was the case when Presse Directe was launched in 2001 (publishers of *Al Ahdath Al Maghribia* and *TelQuel*, and when the new company TelQuel Media was taken over and launched in 2013. The same participatory model was adopted when *Al Jarida Al Oula* started in 2008. This model, however, relies on the personality of a dedicated journalist-businessman able to rally around himself the support required to ensure 'independence' and the public listing of influential shareholders with a reputation for being 'non-manipulable' as a guarantee of respectability. It is not very common.

Between these two poles, there is a continuum of possible positions. One is by the careful entrepreneur with limited resources but still, able to draw on self-financing and, if required, more informal financing solutions. The choices are precarious, but often combine several of the following: extended payment deadlines; term loans from distributors, such as Sapress, (Société Arabo-Africaine de Distribution, d'Édition et de Presse) which is the largest,²⁶ and long-term exclusive advertising contracts. Examples in the market include *Maroc Hebdo* (which enjoyed, for a long time, the support of the Office National des Aéroports) and *Goud* (based on number of clicks and partial contracts), as well as *Al Ousboue*, *Al Ayam*, *Febrayer* and *Quid*. Media ownership everywhere has a certain allure, and no less so in Morocco, where there are always journalists or businessmen eager to try their hand at setting up an inexpensive production system and thereby become self-reliant.

Equally common is the professional investor able to self-finance and involve, from the outset, allies closely connected to dominant factions in the political or economic arena. *La Vie Éco* (Caractères group), *L'Économiste* (Éco-Médias), the monthly *Din Wa Dunia* or the *Médias 24* website have been funded by well-connected and skilled professional journalists with strong support from highly qualified managers, looking to protect and improve their reputation and influence, at various levels. They, and others, have one thing in common: they are supported by professionals who have developed a wide relational and commercial network and are backed by flourishing economic ventures in parallel to their media activity. Bigger stakeholders include Kamal Lahlou, whose press group was initially based around *La Gazette du Sport* (now *La Gazette du Maroc*), and an urban billboard

company, New Publicity; Ahmed Charaï who, before building a multifaceted press group, first launched *Observateur.ma*, had a long career as sale agent for newspapers, and ran his own company dealing with public relations events and finally, Aziz Daki, a former journalist who, before launching the highly successful *360.ma* website, was a businessman in the visual arts sector, via Galerie 21, one of the most popular venues of its time.

The publicity oligopoly

Advertisement constitutes another key area in the economic and political balance exerted by the press companies. Before the early 2000s, the advertising content of newspapers was still very limited, given the small number of commercial platforms. Moreover, the distribution sector was shared between the dominant French-speaking part of the sector, primarily via Sochepress,²⁷ and senior leaders of opposition parties, who owned shares in Sapress. As the advertising market started growing and the newspapers reached the critical mass required to take advantage of this growth, Jean-Louis Servan-Schreiber, the discreet but influential shareholder of Presse Directe, which, at the time, owned the weekly *TelQuel*, encouraged the publication of sales figures as a protest against the cronyism regulating the relationship between advertisers and newspapers, and the unfair granting of adverts (interview, December 2015). In the early 2000s, the Fédération Marocaine des Éditeurs de Journaux and of the l'Office de Justification de la Diffusion were created, both based on the French model, and indeed, the publication of some sales figures ensued, giving a number of press directors reason to hope that the selection of advertisers and companies receiving State beneficence would be more 'transparent' and 'fair'. However, several subsequent investigations have pointed to the gap between the hopes of these aspiring institutions, the will expressed by the establishment stakeholders to protect their market share whatever their actual sales figures, and actual economic practices.

The advertising market

The press share in advertisement revenues is not only very small in Morocco but has declined (19.5% end of May 2014 against 22.6% in 2012), facing stiff competition from television (which commanded 27.8% in May 2014) and billboards (27.7%). It is still greater than radio but perhaps not for long as unlike the press, radio is progressing rapidly (currently press stands at 23.6% against 16.5% for radio) (Imperium 2014). The market is totally controlled by an oligopoly. Five big advertising companies share most of the publicity campaigns paid for by large public and private companies and foundations. They are: (1) Shems, founded in 1972 and led by the businessman Nouredine

Ayouch; (2) Klem, created in 1976, becoming Klem Euro RSCG in the late 1980s and is owned equally by its founder, Kadiri Abdelhamid, who used to work for the Havas group, and the French group Euro RSCG; (3) Saga Communication, founded in 1993 by Chakir Fassi Fihri, former Director of Banque Marocaine du
 685 **AQ5** Commerce Extérieur; (4) DDB Zone Bleue, created in 1995 and is a subsidiary
 ▲ of the biggest advertising group in the world, Publicis-Omnicom and (5) Mozaïk, started also in 1993, by Monique Elgrichi, former employee of the Klem Euro RSCG agency.

Recently, according to several interviewees, the system of publicity
 690 buying has undergone change. Advertisers are increasingly relying on the services of consulting agencies, rather than those of purchasing organisations, to reduce brokerage costs. This trend is most apparent in the form of digital practices and the web press. The most iconic of the digital communication companies acting as advertising networks is Touch Media, subsidiary of FinanceCom, owned by the richest person in Morocco, Othman Benjelloun, a banker and businessman, and President of BMCE Bank, formerly Banque Marocaine du Commerce Extérieur. Besides selling spaces for advertisers and managing several portfolios, his company launched a portal, NOA Médaille Direct, grouping together the most visited information or e-commerce sites. Faced with this kind of offensive by newcomers, established companies used to sharing all the publicity market revenues between themselves, are trying to gain a foothold in the online publicity market. Since 2014, they have been experimenting with dedicated digital structures: Kenzmedia for Shems; Initiative Digital for Klem; Adweb for Fccom and DDB digital for Zone Bleue.
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Shake-up and emergence of new distribution players

The distribution market has also undergone three major transformations recently. First has been the change in ownership of two large distributors. The most significant has been the acquisition by a subsidiary of Banque Populaire of the distribution company Sapress, which was previously owned by the leaders of left-wing parties. On the one hand, this is symptomatic of the declining role of the parties in the press sector; on the other, it highlights the growing power of the financial sector, which was strengthened in 2015.²⁸ The Sapress capital is now held equally by three finance players: two insurance contingency funds (CIMR and MAMDA) and the Banque Populaire group. It also marks the end of an artisanal period during which the Sapress founder and former director, Mohamed Berrada, was an informal regulator, for several newspapers which were newly launched or in trouble, as well as a banker and supplier of cash. This period has now been replaced by a more commercial and process-based system (interview with the manager of a weekly, October 2015).
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The second change, related to the first, is the creation of a new distribution company in 2008, *Al Wasit Press*, by the *Al Massae* group, at a time when its flagship newspaper reached record sales (114,458 copies), and when *Sapress* saw its turnover halve (interview with a senior executive of *Al Massae* at the time, October 2015).²⁹ The impact of this strategic move became apparent two years later as the publishing company achieved financial autonomy, enabling it to position itself as a major media player.

The third transformation is the arrival of free publications onto the market. Most notable is the case of Mohamed Laraki, who came to Morocco from France with a management/logistics background, and started the *Géocible* company, now one of the leaders in advertising distribution. Its products reach 1.5 million letter boxes in Casablanca, Rabat, Tangiers and Marrakech (interview with two of the authors, April 2016).

In the course of this shifting landscape, what has not changed is the historical predominance of the French-speaking faction, thus continuing the unbalanced distribution of advertising manna between the Arabic publications and the French publications. In 2008, according to the Group of Moroccan advertisers (in a survey mentioned by Naji, 2011, 265–266), the biggest advertising revenues were recorded by French publications such as *L'Économiste* (125.3 million dirhams, ca. \$12.5 million), and *Le Matin* (88.6 million dirhams). Yet, *L'Économiste* and *Le Matin* have small audiences (19,556 and 25,439 daily copies, respectively); their Arabic equivalents, such as *Al Massae*, have by contrast, a turnover of 66 million dirhams, and print 114,784 copies per day; *Assabah* generates 42.9 million dirhams a day and publishes 69,545 copies. Yet, according to the same survey, 77% of advertising investments went to the French press (KPMG 2011, 34).

Full reconstruction of audiences, with specific consumption modes

To understand the political economy of the Moroccan press sector, it is worth reviewing the characteristics of the national social sphere. Demographic indicators might suggest an a priori existence of a large press audience. Growth has been explosive – the Moroccan population has almost tripled in the past 50 years (11.6 million inhabitants in 1960; 33.8 million in 2014) – as has urbanisation (almost two-thirds of the population now lives in cities, having been less than a third in 1960). Morocco is also a very young country (28.8% of the population is under 15 years old). This social space still has limited audiences, however. For several decades after Independence, the national education policy was designed explicitly to reproduce the social conditions enabling a very limited power circle, who were essentially French-speaking to thrive, as an extension of colonisation. This is why, although it has been steadily decreasing in the last few decades, the illiteracy rate

remains very high: 32% in 2014, 43% in 2004, 55% in 1994, 65% in 1982 and 87% in 1960.³⁰ In comparison, this rate was 18.8% in Tunisia in 2014 (23.3% in 2004³¹) and 15% in Algeria (Office National d'Alphabétisation et d'Enseignement pour Adultes).³² Some 45% of the Moroccan population aged 25 or over has had little or no education.

This naturally has affected the size of the reading population, with consumers of press restricted to a few narrow demographic groups: those with the highest economic and cultural capital, and those living in towns. Several of the interviewees stated that most readers of the Moroccan national press are located in the Rabat-Salé-Kénitra region and in the Greater Grand Casablanca-Settat area.

Another characteristic of the audience structure is linked to gender inequalities.³³ For instance, the illiteracy rate for women (41.9%) is almost twice that of men (22.1%), although this gap is narrowing. Little data are available about women's visits to online information sites but indicators point to the likelihood that women are starting to close the gap in that area as well. The social and linguistic structure of Morocco reveals the increasing importance of Arabic as a publishing language, whereas French is becoming increasingly 'niche', as often stated by advertisers. The latest census states that 99.4% of literate people aged 10 and over can read and write in Arabic, against 66% for French, and 18.3% for English.

Audience reading habits are another factor that affects the market (Daghmi, Pulvar, and Toumi 2012) leading to lower revenues. The percentage of readers in cafés (69% versus 39% at home, TMS-CSA survey), or at work (23%), is very high. This means that reading is relatively widely shared as shown by the circulation rate of dailies: 70% of respondents who stated that they read a daily newspaper share it, after reading it, with a least 1 person, and 45% share it with at least 2 persons. Less than half the readers confirm that they have bought the copy they read.

One last audience feature worth mentioning is that a certain percentage of Moroccans do not work or live within the national territory because of high emigration levels, positively affecting the social media landscape. In addition to the popularity of the Yabiladi website, explicitly designed for Moroccans living abroad (Benchenna 2014), visits to the electronic press from outside the national borders are high. The Paris region will often come third, after Rabat and Casablanca, in number of visits, according to figures published by Google Analytics. In several interviews, we were shown live figures by electronic website leaders.

AQ8 Exit, voice and loyalty

This work has revealed that many media structures in Morocco suffer from a high level of precariousness and a weakening of their autonomy. In a context

where the potential press audience remains relatively limited and where formal media structures hold little or no independent power, those with political and economic authority are able to generate economic, political, technical and social conditions that render it practically impossible for alternative media to call into question the political and social order.

Albert Otto Hirschman's model of three discontent modalities (exit, voice and loyalty) facing the way organisations operate (1970) can usefully help summarise the positions used and taken by the main publishing executives—managers in Morocco. Although statistically rare, 'exit' has been a 'choice' made by a few, who, like Ahmed Réda Benchemsi (founder of *TelQuel* and *Nichane*) and Aboubakr Jamaï (publisher of *Le Journal*), left Morocco as well as any further journalism activity. The former is currently in charge of communication at Human Rights Watch, whereas the latter is Dean of the Business and International Relations School at the American Institute of Universities (IAU College) in Aix-en-Provence (France). Another group has chosen to stay in Morocco, but have changed careers or modes of expression. Thus, 'voice' can be understood as continuing to speak out, but by creating, for example, online platforms, usually with very modest means, and remaining fragile economically. Perhaps the best examples are the two versions of Ali Anouzla's *Lakome* site. Third, 'loyalty' has generally triumphed as the dominant factor, with many executives—managers continuing to produce news by relying on well-placed economic groups and being mindful of the 'red lines', a fundamental requirement to successfully work in this field in the country they originate from.

Notes

1. Among the rare exceptions are: Hidass 2007 and 2016; Naïmi 2016; El-Issawi 2016; Benslimane 2015; Benchenna 2014; Miller 2012a, 2012b; Cohen 2011; Marley 2010 and Iddins 2015. See also series published by History monthly *Zamane* in 2012 and entirely dedicated to the 'Moroccan press saga' (<http://zamane.ma/fr/?s=%22La+saga+de+la+presse+marocaine%22>).
2. This article is the first stage of an ongoing research project, partly via interviews; however, for formatting reasons, this material is not used directly in this text. Thirty-one interviews were carried out in 2015 and 2016 with directors of both print and electronic publication publications and journalists. The interviews and the documentary research used relate to a representative sample of various contemporary strands of the private Moroccan paper and electronic press sector. The study takes into account several parameters: distribution, type of support, connections with the authorities and economic model. This ongoing research has also been financed as part of a project with Labex ICCA (Paris) and CESEM, research centre of HEM (Rabat). This research and its publication would not have been possible without the generous support of the Al Jazeera Media Corp. and the University of Cambridge – Al Jazeera Media Project. We want also to thank Roxane Farmanfarman and Ali Sonay for their suggestions and remarks.

3. To help in reading this text, from here forward, the word 'press' will be used to describe both the printed and electronic news press.
4. See Samia Errazzouki's contribution in this issue.
5. Haut-commissariat au Plan, *National Inquiry on timetables in Morocco*, 2011/2012. <http://www.hcp.ma/region-drda/attachment/534458/>.
6. All data in this section come from this organisation, unless otherwise specified.
7. This constant perimeter only takes into account the publications existing during both of these periods, while ignoring all new publications or transfers.
8. Agence nationale de réglementation des télécommunications (ANRT).
9. LMS-CSA pour la Fédération marocaine des éditeurs de journaux (FMEJ).
10. Minister for Communication of the Kingdom of Morocco, *Efforts to Promote the Freedom of the Press: Annual Report*. p. 36. http://mincom.gov.ma/landing/demo/template/wordpress/media/k2/attachments/Liberte_de_la_presse_VF_07_03_13.pdf.
11. These figures were published by the Minister of Communication and mentioned by Mouhtadi 2008, 79. This kind of research was not conducted by the Ministry beyond 2006, and more current data are therefore not available.
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14. Moulay Hafid Elalamy took over *Zamane* magazine, and *La Vie Éco* in 2012. April 30. <http://laviéco.com/news/economie/moulay-hafid-elalamy-prend-le-controle-du-magazine-zamane-21964.html>.
15. Online companies only.
16. <http://www.globalmediaholding.ma/>.
17. <http://www.geomedia.ma/>.
18. Karim Bennani was joint shareholder of Intégral Media with Mohamed VI's political counsellor, Fouad Ali El Himma and the Royal Palace communicator royal, Karim Bouzida, the company applying for a television broadcasting licence in 2008 (Source: *Maghreb Confidentiel*, no. 1138, 8 January 2015).
19. The Monarchy traces its lineage directly from the Prophet Mohamed, and hence, claims divine leadership over the Alaouite community.
20. <http://adala.justice.gov.ma/production/html/Fr/liens/..%5C44731.htm>.
21. King's speech, 30 July 2004.
22. <http://www.goud.ma/الصحافة-الممنوح-العمومي-الدعم-لائحة-100480>, le 12 avril 2012.
23. « مفارقات لائحة الصحف المستفيدة من الدعم », 4 April 2012. <http://www.hespress.com/medias/50941.html>.
24. ('L'aide aux journalistes : La liberté de la presse en otage I', *Journalismes in bled*, 14 February 2016, <https://journalinbled.wordpress.com/2016/02/14/laide-aux-journalistes-la-liberte-de-la-presse-en-otage/>).
25. « الصحفي سليمان أليسوني يملأ صفقات شيدني بمعامل الحكيم », *Anwalpress.com*, 19 July 2016. <http://anwalpress.com/رشي-لصفقة-ي-لم-ح-الريسوني-سليمان-الصحنفي>.
26. Sapress (Société Arabo-Africaine de Distribution, d'Édition et de Presse) was created in 1977 by three political parties (Istiqlal, Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires and Parti du Progrès et du Socialisme), with the intention of developing a national press in a country where foreign publications held a significant share of the market.
27. Sochepress (Société Chérifienne de Distribution et de Presse), in the 1950s, succeeds Messageries Hachette as press distributor in Morocco. After Independence

and as per the 'Moroccanisation' of companies, it is managed both by the State and by the Hachette group. In 1975, all shares were held by the Moroccan state, before privatisation, 20 years later, for the profit of the Lahrizi family and Nouvelles Messagerie de la Presse Parisienne (renamed Presstalis). Since 2008, Sochepress is entirely owned by this French company.

28. *Les Éco*, 12 January 2015 (<http://www.leseco.ma/business/25130-virage-strategique-pour-sapress.html>) and *360.ma*, 12 January 2015 (<http://fr.le360.ma/medias/sapress-nouveau-patron-nouveau-mode-de-gestion-29481>).
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33. See article by Kenza Oumlil (2017), in this issue.

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