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# The limits of State-sponsored media (contra)flows: 'Measuring' influence in global communication

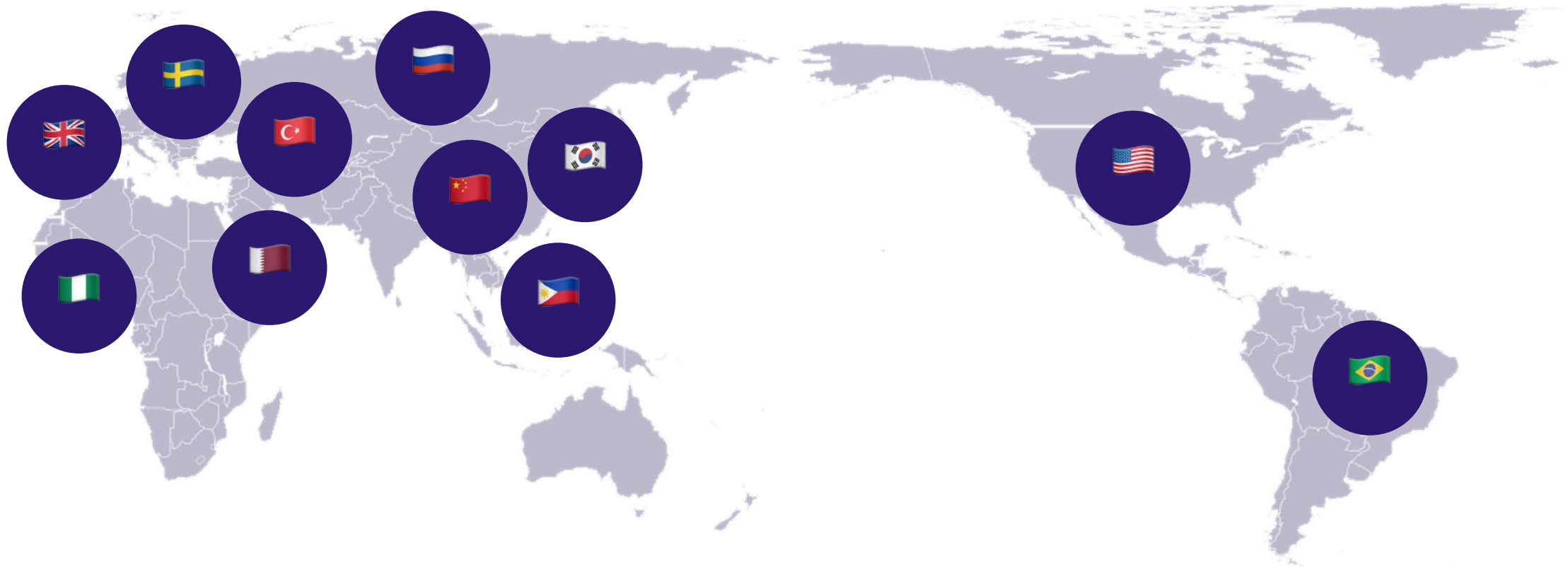
Dani Madrid-Morales | The University of Sheffield | @DMadrid\_M

September 16, 2022, Department of Media Studies, Stockholm University





# Media flows and the 'State' – 21<sup>st</sup> Century





# Media flows and contra-flows (Thussu, 2007)

## DOMINANT FLOWS

### GLOBAL

Hollywood  
MTV  
CNN  
Discovery  
BBC  
Google  
CNBC  
Wall Street Journal  
Japanese animation

### TRANSNATIONAL

'Bollywood'  
Al-Jazeera  
Telenovelas  
TV5  
Telesur  
CCTV-9  
RTTV  
M-Net  
Korean films

## CONTRA-FLOWS

### GEO-CULTURAL

Phoenix  
Zee TV  
TRT-International  
Al-Hayat  
Baidu.com  
MBC  
NHK World TV  
Islamonline.net  
Roj TV



# Layered media flows and contra-flows

## DOMINANT FLOWS

## CONTRA-FLOWS

GLOBAL

TRANSNATIONAL

GEO-CULTURAL

**FLOWS OF CAPITAL**

**FLOWS OF CONTENT**

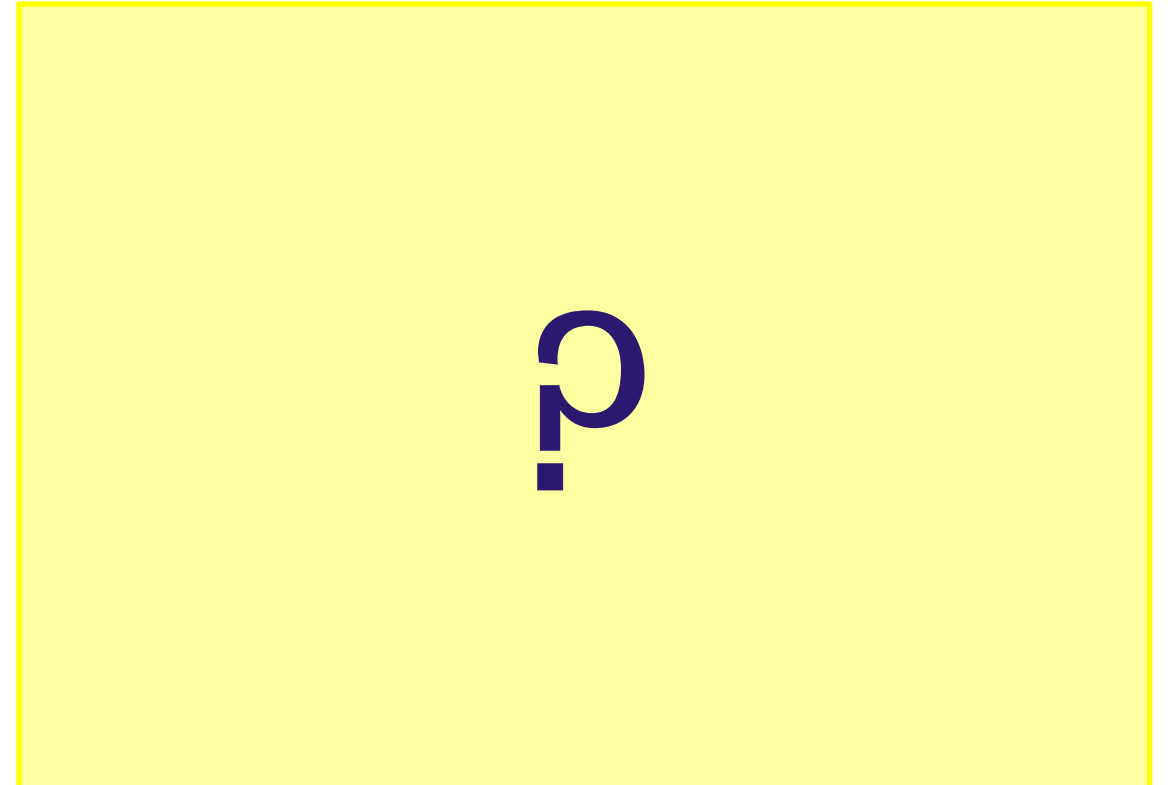
**FLOWS OF NORMS AND VALUES**

# Successful **State-sponsored** news contraflow(s)?

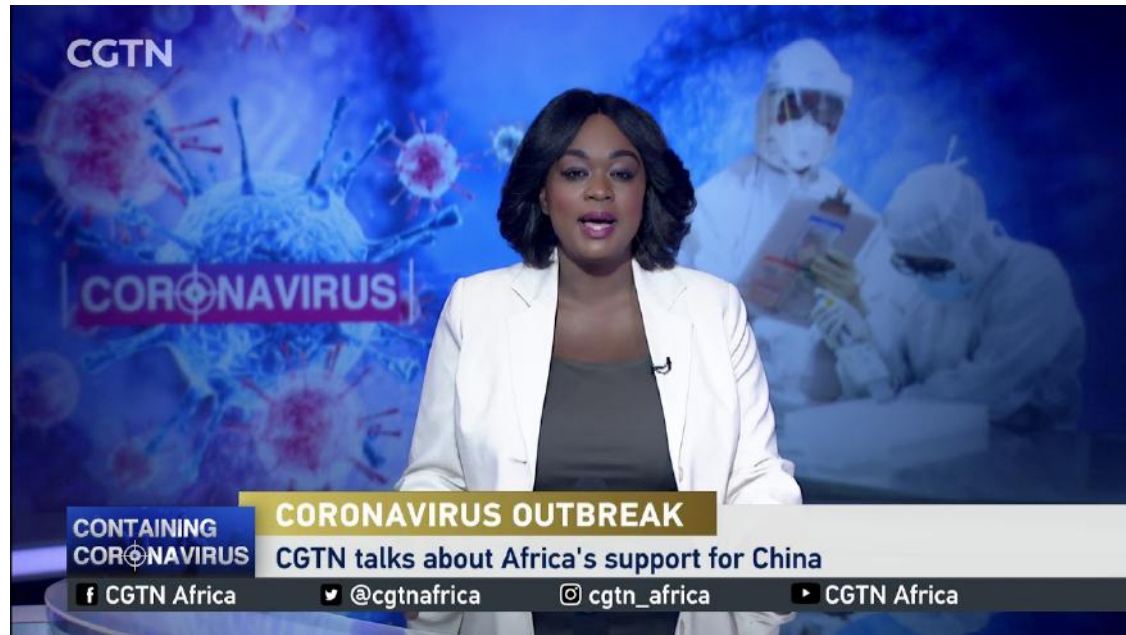




# Successful **State-backed** non-news contraflow(s)?



# Are Chinese media successful contraflow(s)?







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# How do we measure success?

# Methodological toolbox for global media scholars



- Audience surveys
- Focus groups
- Observation
- TV programming analysis



- Text reuse
- Topic modeling
- Computer vision
- Social media analysis



# Issues

- Can we study audiences and content studies together?
- Can we truly triangulate these different types of data?
- How do we ‘measure’, or ‘assess’, or ‘evaluate’ effectiveness?



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# Watching TV

... or how a project on how audiences engage with content became one on technological failure.



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# The evolution of a project



Kajiado county, Stage 1



West Pokot county, Stage 2





# The scope the project



30+ households/village



Two shared spaces/village





# Technological failure





# Unexpected outcomes







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# Plurality of choices







# Expectations vs reality

## Chinese-aided satellite TV project helps connect African villages to the world

New vision

By Huang Lanlan and Hu Yuwei

Published: Oct 18, 2021 08:34 PM



Children watch TV in a village in Cote d'Ivoire. The Wan Cun Tong project cooperates with some 500 villages in Cote d'Ivoire. (Photo: Courtesy of StarTimes)



## Global Times

Hehrt curiously watches workers install a satellite TV at the hospital in which he works. He rushes to the TV and changes channels after it's been installed, and becomes very excited when there is a kung fu movie. "And it's in English!" he says. "I used to watch Jackie Chan's and Jet Li's kung fu movies."

It was in June 2019 when China's technical team came to doctor Hehrt's hospital in Olasiti, a small village in Kenya, to help set up a satellite TV signal. Prior to that, the hospital had neither a signal nor a television, and sometimes patients would get bored and impatient after waiting to see a doctor for hours while doing nothing, Hehrt recalled.





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# Expectations vs reality



Hospital in Olasiti







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# COM4DEV All Over



# Pay TV is expensive





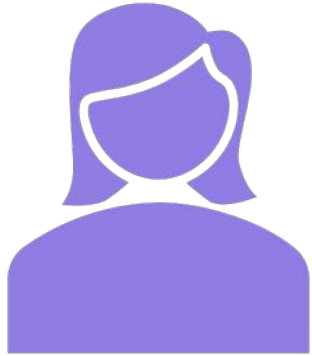
# What about those who do watch?







# African audiences, Chinese content?



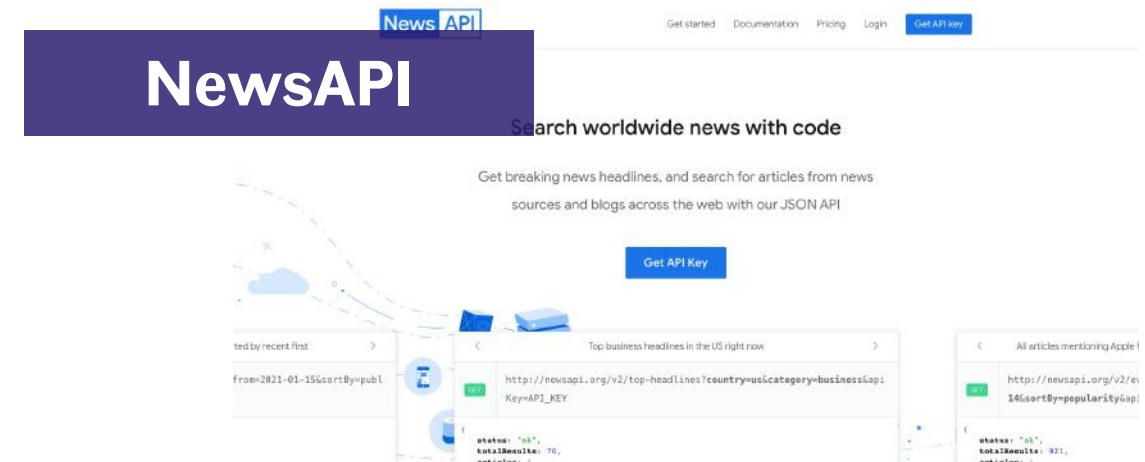
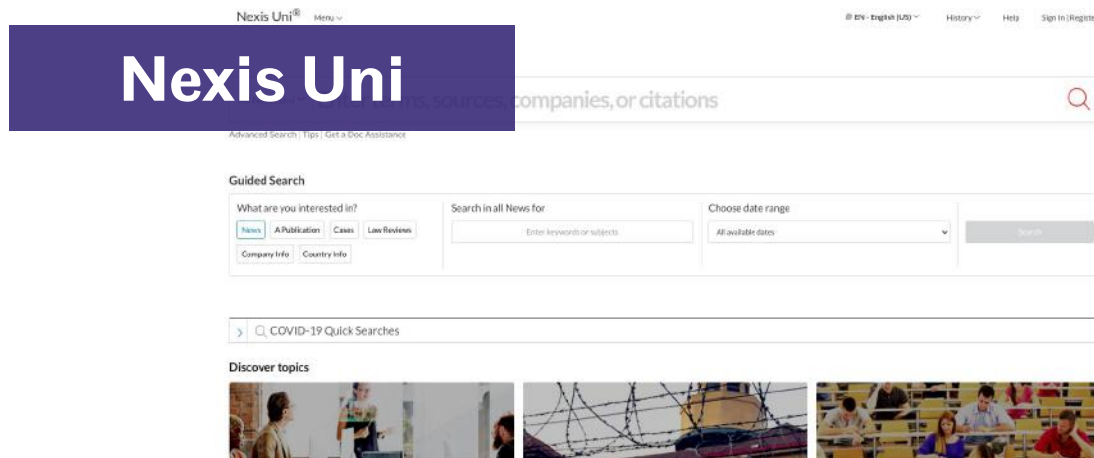


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# Quantifying News Flows

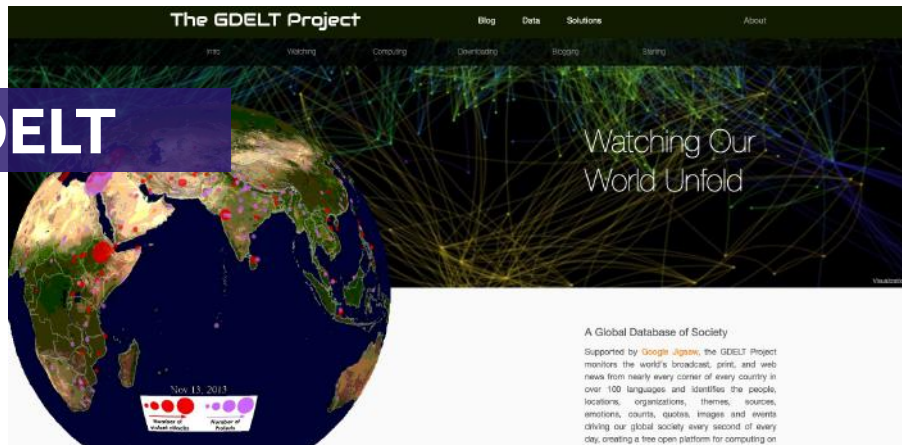


# Limitations of existing news archives



# Limitations of existing archives/corpora

## GDELT



## NOW Corpus



The screenshot shows the interface of the NOW Corpus (News on the Web). It includes a search bar, a "Find matching strings" button, and a "Reset" button. There are also tabs for "List", "Chart", "Collocates", "Compare", and "KWIC". The interface is designed for searching and analyzing news data. A sidebar on the right provides additional information about the corpus, including a download button and a description of the data source.



# Algorithmic biases

Google search results for "Tigray". The search bar shows "Tigray" and the results indicate "About 1,900,000 results (0.52 seconds)". The first result is from Yahoo News, titled "Ethiopia's Tigray crisis: 'I lost my hand when a soldier tried to rape me'", with a sub-headline "A teenager caught up in Ethiopia's Tigray conflict tells of her and her grandfather's near-death encounter." and a timestamp of "23 hours ago". An image of a hand is visible next to the text.

Google search results for "site:addisstandard.com Tigray". The search bar shows "site:addisstandard.com Tigray" and the results indicate "About 1,240 results (0.50 seconds)". The first result is from addisstandard.com, titled "News: Ethiopia 'deeply concerned' by EU statement on Tigray, stays silent on accusations of Eritrea's role in the...", with a sub-headline "News: Ethiopia 'deeply concerned' by EU statement on Tigray, stays silent on accusations of Eritrea's role in the armed conflict." and a timestamp of "6 days ago". An image of a man speaking is visible next to the text.

When you refine a search with a "site:" operator, Google shows results from all the indexed pages from the website you specified.

The second result is also from addisstandard.com, titled "News Alert: EU joins the US in calling withdrawal of Eritrean troops from Ethiopia, says they are 'fueling the...'", with a sub-headline "EU's latest call on the need to withdraw Eritrean forces from Tigray shows that there is a transatlantic consensus between European Union and ..." and a timestamp of "1 week ago". An image of the EU flag is visible next to the text.



# Africa Digital News Corpus

- In 2019 I started a pilot project to monitor news content published on digital news websites in Africa
- This project collects data in real time to create a live corpus of news.

<https://doi.org/10.18738/T8/UKJZ3E>

## African Digital News Dataverse Collection

(University of Houston)

Texas Data Repository > University of Houston Dataverse Repository > African Digital News Dataverse Collection >

### Corpus of African Digital News from 600 Websites Formatted for Text Mining / Computational Text Analysis

Version 3.0

Madrid-Morales, D.; Lindner, P.; Periyasamy, M., 2021, "Corpus of African Digital News from 600 Websites Formatted for Text Mining / Computational Text Analysis", <https://doi.org/10.18738/T8/UKJZ3E>, Texas Data Repository, V3

Cite Dataset

Learn about Data Citation Standards.

Access Dataset

Contact Owner

Share

Dataset Metrics

916 Views

266 Downloads

0 Citations

#### Description

This dataset includes a corpus 200,000+ news articles published by 600 African news organizations between December 4, 2020 and January 3, 2021. The texts have been pre-processed (punctuation and English stopwords have been removed, features have been lowercased, lemmatized and POS-tagged) and stored in commonly used formats for text mining/computational text analysis. Users are advised to read the documentation for an explanation of the data collection process.

This dataset includes the following items:

- 31 tables (one per day) of lowercased and lemmatized tokens with the following additional variables: POS tags, document id, sentence id, token id

[Read full Description \[-\]](#)

#### Subject

Arts and Humanities; Social Sciences

#### Keyword

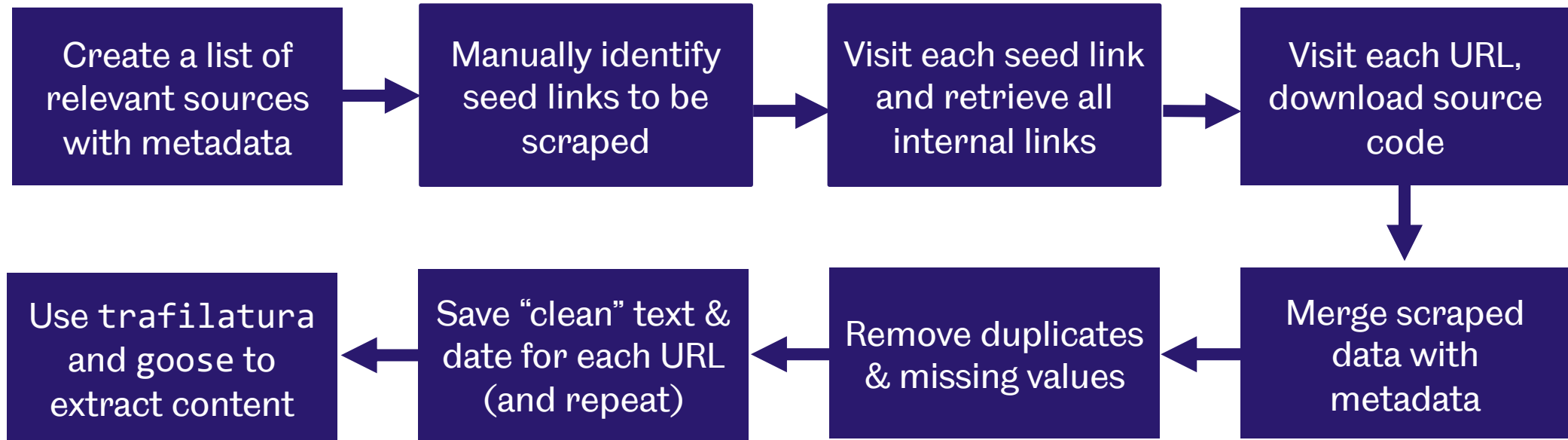
news, Africa, digital news, text mining, computational

License/Data Use  
Agreement

 CC0 1.0

Open Access  
Open Source

# Africa Digital News Corpus





# Step 1 – Seed Links

Create a list of  
pages you want  
to scrape

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
country_name	country_is	medium_name	alexa_scd	source	url	news_site
Burkina Faso	BF	<a href="http://www.aib.media">http://www.aib.media</a>	NA	xyzlinks	<a href="http://www.aib.media">http://www.aib.media</a>	TRUE
Burkina Faso	BF	<a href="http://www.aouaga.com">http://www.aouaga.com</a>	NA	xyzlinks	<a href="http://www.aouaga.com">http://www.aouaga.com</a>	TRUE
Burkina Faso	BF	<a href="http://www.aujourd8.net">http://www.aujourd8.net</a>	NA	xyzlinks	<a href="http://www.aujourd8.net">http://www.aujourd8.net</a>	TRUE
Burkina Faso	BF	<a href="http://www.burkina24.com">http://www.burkina24.com</a>	NA	xyzlinks	<a href="http://www.burkina24.com">http://www.burkina24.com</a>	TRUE
Burkina Faso	BF	<a href="http://www.burkinainfo.com">http://www.burkinainfo.com</a>	NA	xyzlinks	<a href="http://www.burkinainfo.com">http://www.burkinainfo.com</a>	TRUE
Burkina Faso	BF	<a href="http://www.faso-actu.net">http://www.faso-actu.net</a>	NA	xyzlinks	<a href="http://www.faso-actu.net">http://www.faso-actu.net</a>	TRUE
Burkina Faso	BF	<a href="http://www.fasopresse.net">http://www.fasopresse.net</a>	NA	xyzlinks	<a href="http://www.fasopresse.net">http://www.fasopresse.net</a>	TRUE
Burkina Faso	BF	<a href="http://www.fasozine.com">http://www.fasozine.com</a>	NA	xyzlinks	<a href="http://www.fasozine.com">http://www.fasozine.com</a>	TRUE
Burkina Faso	BF	<a href="http://www.leconomistedufaso.bf">http://www.leconomistedufaso.bf</a>	NA	xyzlinks	<a href="http://www.leconomistedufaso.bf">http://www.leconomistedufaso.bf</a>	TRUE
Burkina Faso	BF	<a href="http://www.lefaso.net">http://www.lefaso.net</a>	NA	xyzlinks	<a href="http://www.lefaso.net">http://www.lefaso.net</a>	TRUE
Burkina Faso	BF	<a href="http://www.lepays.bf">http://www.lepays.bf</a>	NA	xyzlinks	<a href="http://www.lepays.bf">http://www.lepays.bf</a>	TRUE
Burkina Faso	BF	<a href="http://www.lepays.bf">http://www.lepays.bf</a>	NA	xyzlinks	<a href="http://www.lepays.bf">http://www.lepays.bf</a>	TRUE
Burkina Faso	BF	<a href="http://www.lesaffairesbf.com">http://www.lesaffairesbf.com</a>	NA	xyzlinks	<a href="http://www.lesaffairesbf.com">http://www.lesaffairesbf.com</a>	TRUE
Burkina Faso	BF	<a href="http://www.lexpressdufaso-bf.com">http://www.lexpressdufaso-bf.com</a>	NA	xyzlinks	<a href="http://www.lexpressdufaso-bf.com">http://www.lexpressdufaso-bf.com</a>	TRUE
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Burundi	BI	<a href="http://www.abpinfos.com">http://www.abpinfos.com</a>	NA	xyzlinks	<a href="http://www.abpinfos.com">http://www.abpinfos.com</a>	TRUE
Burundi	BI	<a href="http://www.arib.info">http://www.arib.info</a>	NA	xyzlinks	<a href="http://www.arib.info">http://www.arib.info</a>	TRUE
Burundi	BI	<a href="http://www.burundi24.wordpress.com">http://www.burundi24.wordpress.com</a>	NA	xyzlinks	<a href="http://www.burundi24.wordpress.com">http://www.burundi24.wordpress.com</a>	TRUE
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Burundi	BI	<a href="http://www.burundi-forum.org">http://www.burundi-forum.org</a>	NA	xyzlinks	<a href="http://www.burundi-forum.org">http://www.burundi-forum.org</a>	TRUE
Burundi	BI	<a href="http://www.burundi-information.net">http://www.burundi-information.net</a>	NA	xyzlinks	<a href="http://www.burundi-information.net">http://www.burundi-information.net</a>	TRUE
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Burundi	BI	<a href="http://www.itaraburundi.com">http://www.itaraburundi.com</a>	NA	xyzlinks	<a href="http://www.itaraburundi.com">http://www.itaraburundi.com</a>	TRUE
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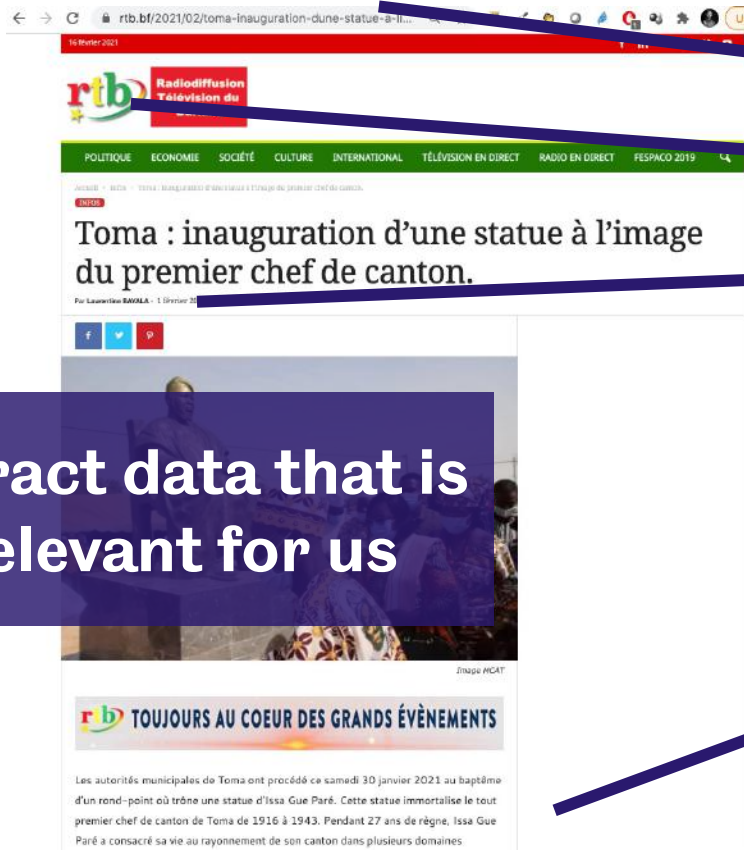
## Step 2 – Retrieve links



Link	URL
Toma : inauguration d'une statue à l'image du premier chef de...	<a href="https://www.rtb.bf/2021/02/oma-inauguration-dune-statue-a-limage-du-premier-chef-de-canton/">https://www.rtb.bf/2021/02/oma-inauguration-dune-statue-a-limage-du-premier-chef-de-canton/</a>
Ouahigouya : des producteurs utilisent le gaz butane pour alimenter les...	<a href="https://www.rtb.bf/2021/02/ouahigouya-des-producteurs-utilisent-le-gaz-butane-pour-alimenter-les-motopompes/">https://www.rtb.bf/2021/02/ouahigouya-des-producteurs-utilisent-le-gaz-butane-pour-alimenter-les-motopompes/</a>
Compte rendu du Conseil des Ministres du 29 janvier 2021	<a href="https://www.rtb.bf/2021/01/compte-rendu-du-conseil-des-ministres-du-29-janvier-2021/">https://www.rtb.bf/2021/01/compte-rendu-du-conseil-des-ministres-du-29-janvier-2021/</a>
Compte-rendu du conseil des ministres du vendredi 29 janvier 2021	<a href="https://www.rtb.bf/2021/01/compte-rendu-du-conseil-des-ministres-du-vendredi-29-janvier-2021/">https://www.rtb.bf/2021/01/compte-rendu-du-conseil-des-ministres-du-vendredi-29-janvier-2021/</a>



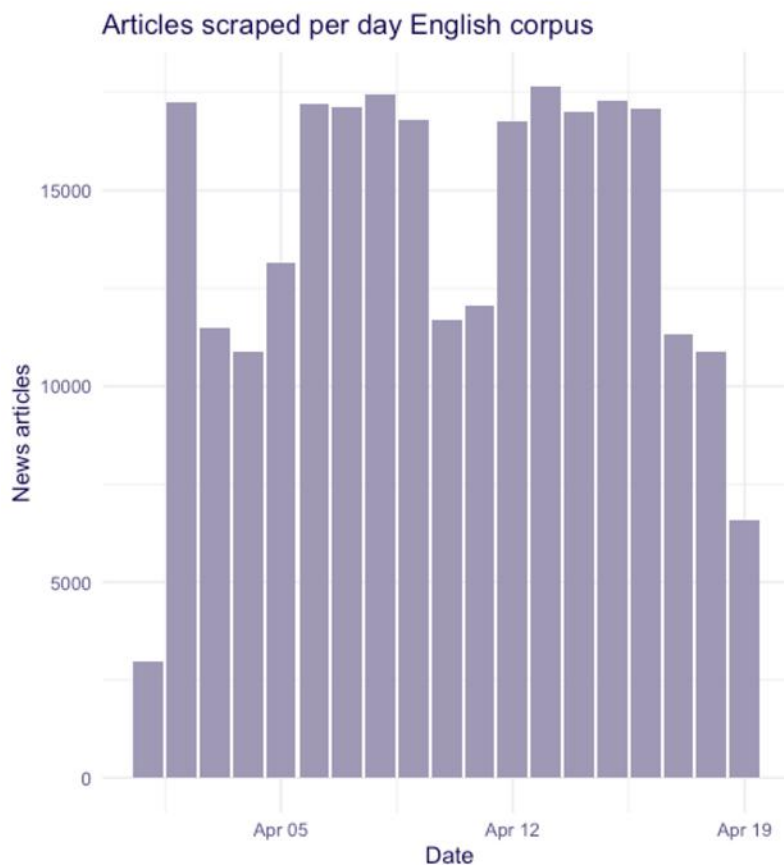
# Step 3 – Extract relevant data



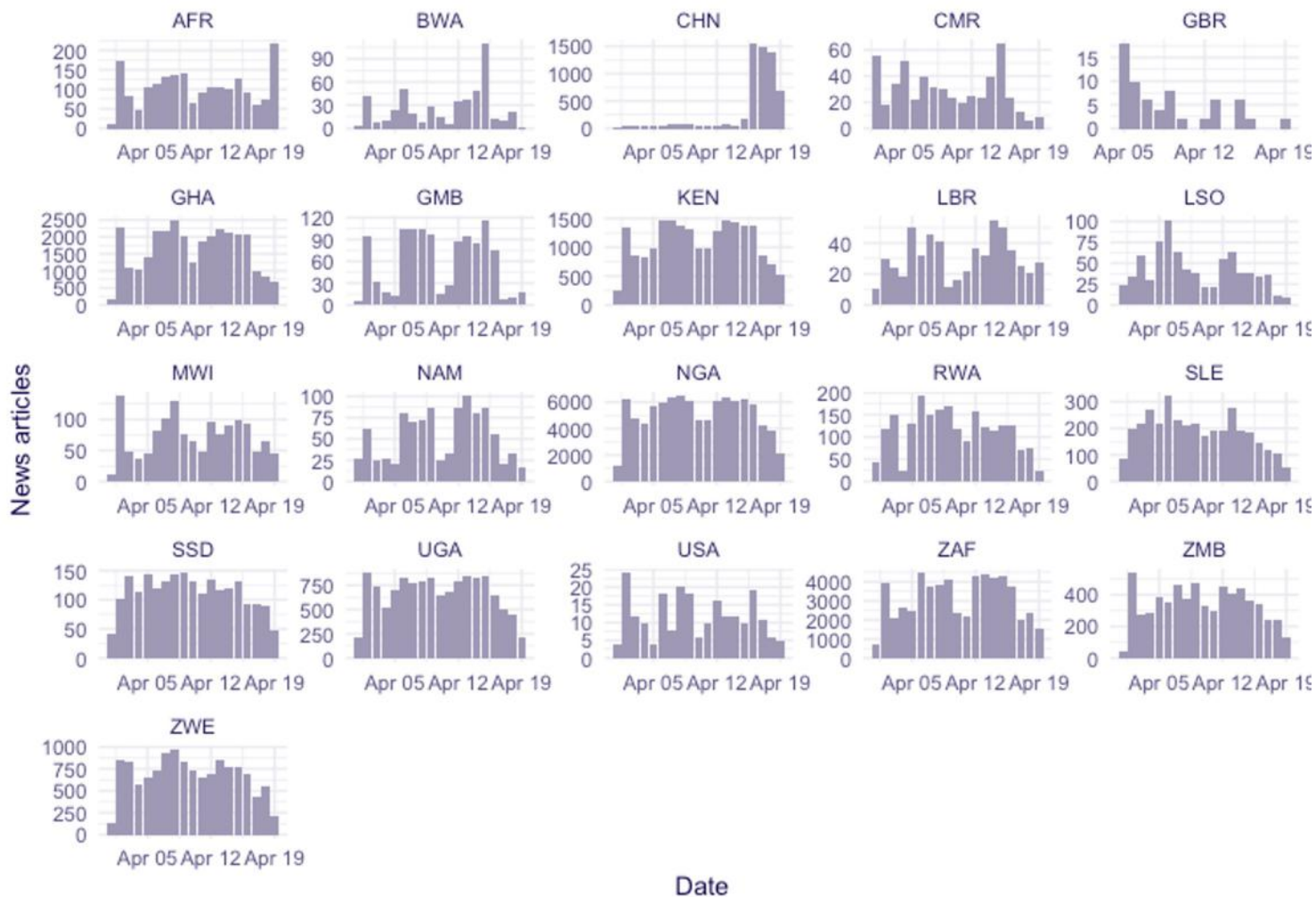
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2020-04-07	abidjan.net	CI	Société Hamed Bakayoko déclaré positif au coronaviru...	https://news.abidjan.net/h/671218.html
2020-04-27	abidjan.net	CI	Société COVID 19: Un don en vivres et non vivres offe...	https://news.abidjan.net/h/672003.html
2020-04-20	abidjan.net	CI	Économie Covid-19: le directeur général de IOMS peu...	https://news.abidjan.net/h/671694.html
2020-04-22	abidjan.net	CI	Économie Hausse du coût de la viande : les acteurs in...	https://news.abidjan.net/h/671803.html
2020-04-29	abidjan.net	CI	Société Covid-19: Le tourisme et des loisirs : les résulta...	https://news.abidjan.net/h/672090.html
2020-04-29	abidjan.net	CI	Économie Covid-19: Les mesures urgentes p...	https://news.abidjan.net/h/670625.html
2020-03-23	abidjan.net	CI	Société Journée mondiale de l'eau 2020 toujours d'ac...	https://news.abidjan.net/h/670673.html
2020-03-27	abidjan.net	CI	International New York, nouvel épicerie de la pandé...	https://news.abidjan.net/h/670803.html
2020-05-06	abidjan.net	CI	Société Ramadan : Hamed Bakayoko offre des vivres a...	https://news.abidjan.net/h/672361.html
2020-05-12	abidjan.net	CI	Société Coronavirus : Le Premier Ministre met la minis...	https://news.abidjan.net/h/672617.html
2020-05-14	abidjan.net	CI	Société Reprise des travaux de la Nationale A3 à Niak...	https://news.abidjan.net/h/672735.html
2020-05-27	abidjan.net	CI	Politique Présidentielle 2020: la révision de la liste éle...	https://news.abidjan.net/h/673528.html
2020-02-27	abidjan.net	CI		https://news.abidjan.net/h/669714.html
2020-04-03	abidjan.net	CI	Économie Covid- 19 Des producteurs de café-cacao r...	https://news.abidjan.net/h/671048.html
2020-04-05	abidjan.net	CI	Société Le préfet de Korhogo appelle la population à s...	https://news.abidjan.net/h/671111.html
2020-04-10	abidjan.net	CI	Région COVID-19 : Agboville lance la phase répressiv...	https://news.abidjan.net/h/671331.html
2020-04-12	abidjan.net	CI	Société Pâques 2020 : L'Eglise méthodiste plaide pour ...	https://news.abidjan.net/h/671409.html
2020-04-15	abidjan.net	CI	Art et Culture Covid 19: Des artistes et journalistes se...	https://news.abidjan.net/h/671480.html
2020-04-10	abidjan.net	CI	Société Coronavirus : Le centre de dépistage de Yopo ...	https://news.abidjan.net/h/671348.html
2020-04-04	abidjan.net	CI	Société Covid-19 : Sensibilisation à outrance à lintéri...	https://news.abidjan.net/h/671076.html
2020-04-09	abidjan.net	CI	Société Covid-19: Voici les techniques utilisées par d...	https://news.abidjan.net/h/671283.html
2020-04-03	abidjan.net	CI	Société Treichville/ Lutte contre le Coronavirus : le co...	https://news.abidjan.net/h/671067.html
2020-04-15	abidjan.net	CI	Société Covid-19: L'état de Côte d'Ivoire proroge le dél...	https://news.abidjan.net/h/671500.html
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2020-03-06	abidjan.net	CI	Société Social: Report du gala de la Fondation Childre...	https://news.abidjan.net/h/670091.html
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2020-03-17	abidjan.net	CI	Société Crise du Coronavirus : Les Abidjanais vivent l...	https://news.abidjan.net/h/670484.html
2020-03-27	abidjan.net	CI	Économie Impacts du Covid-19 dans l'UEMOA : Avis r...	https://news.abidjan.net/h/670824.html



# Data volume



Articles scraped per day by country

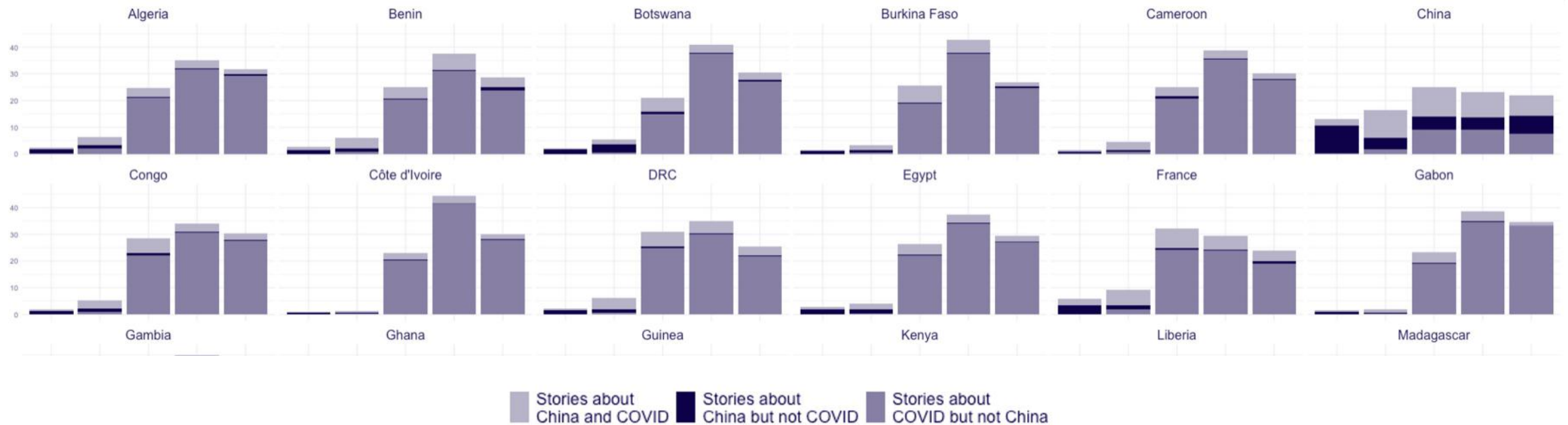




# Applications

- This same process can be used to collect content from government websites, discussion fora, citizen journalism platforms...
  - We can answer **descriptive questions** about content
  - We can answer questions about **linguistic patterns**
  - We can compare sources **across geographic spaces**
  - We can trace **longitudinal patterns**
  - We can **triangulate text data** with other data

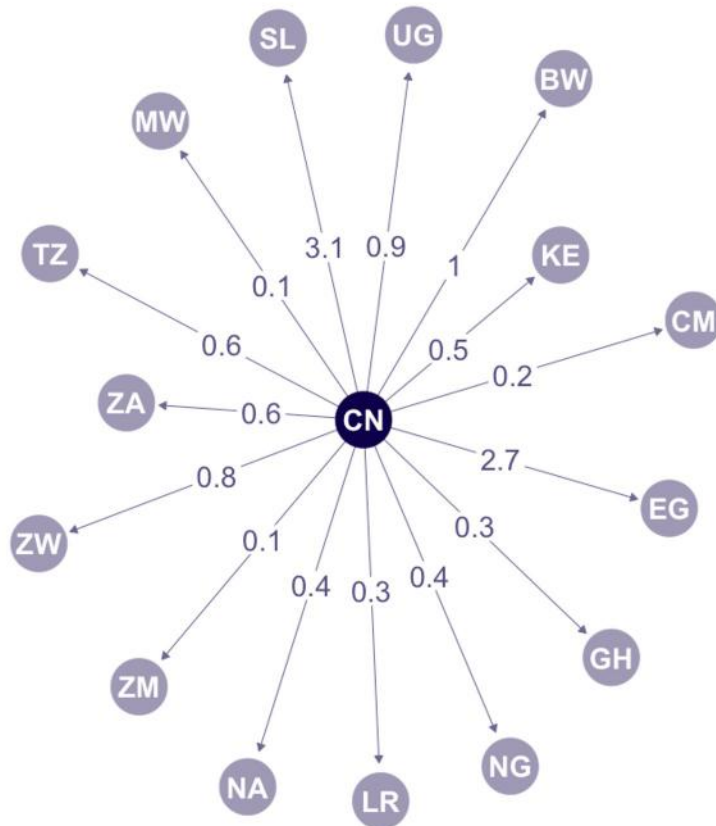
# Global News Flows



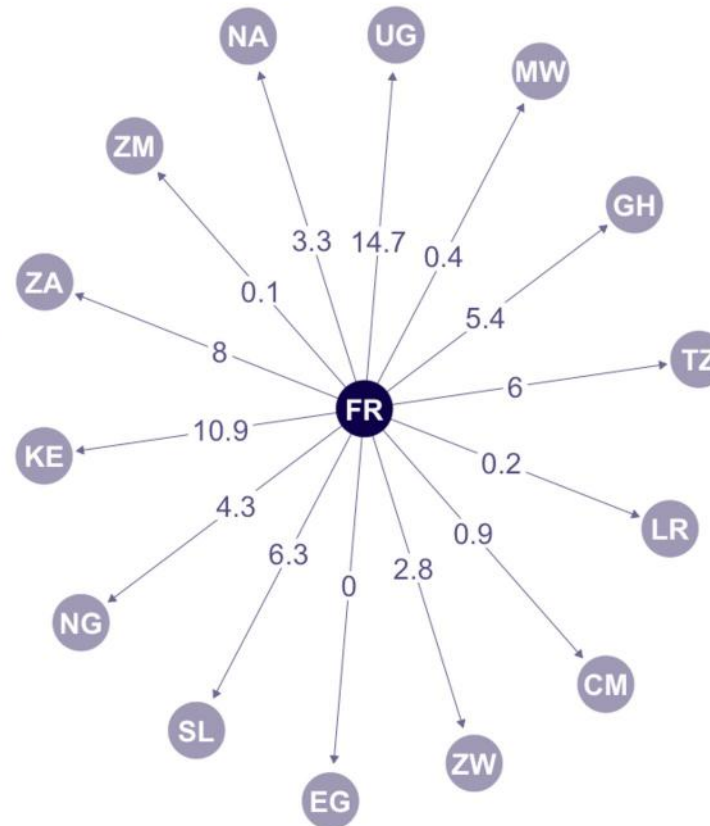


# Global News Flows

a. China



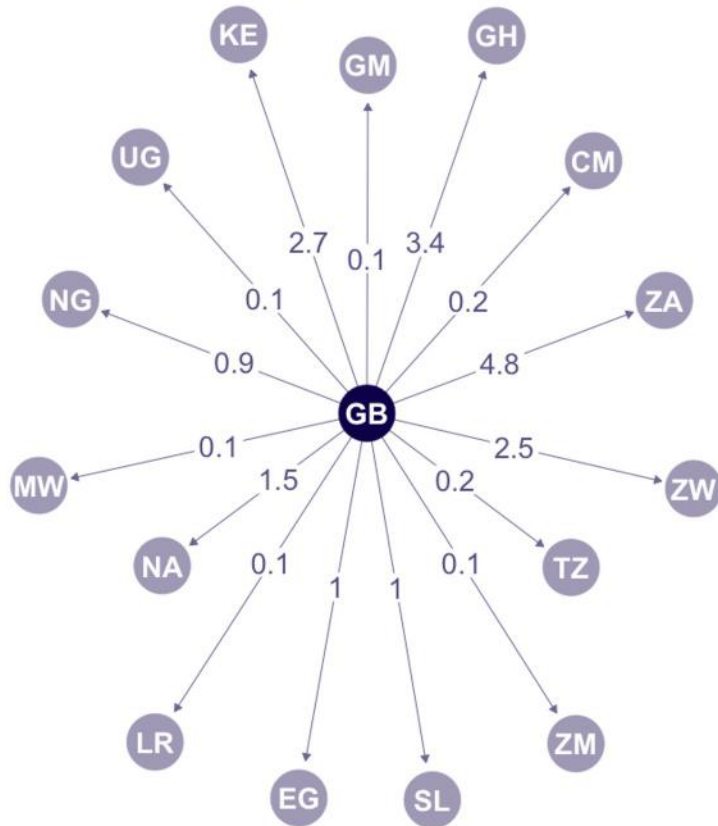
b. France



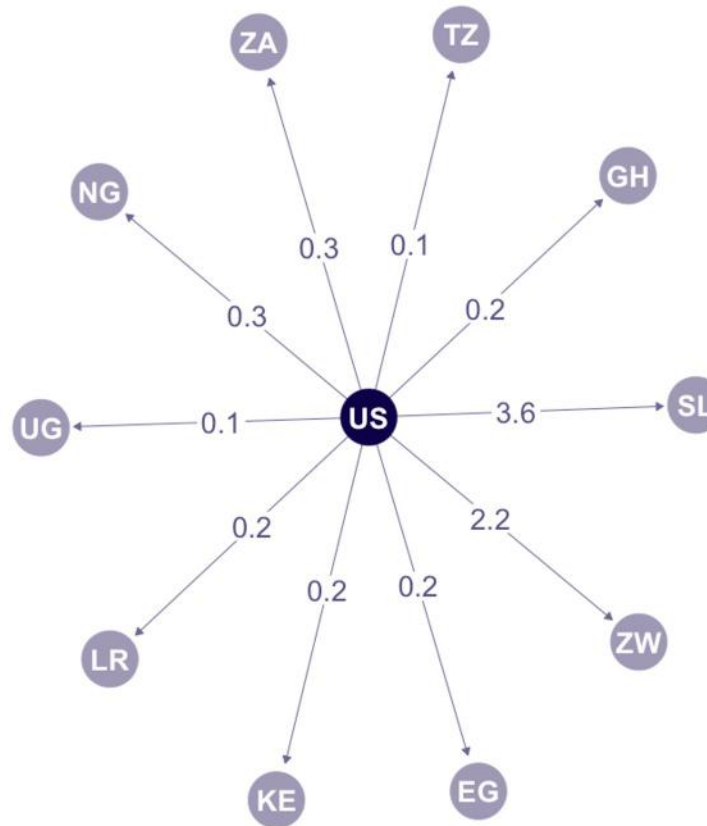
**Text reuse in African  
English-language  
media coverage of  
COVID-19**

# Global News Flows

c. United Kingdom



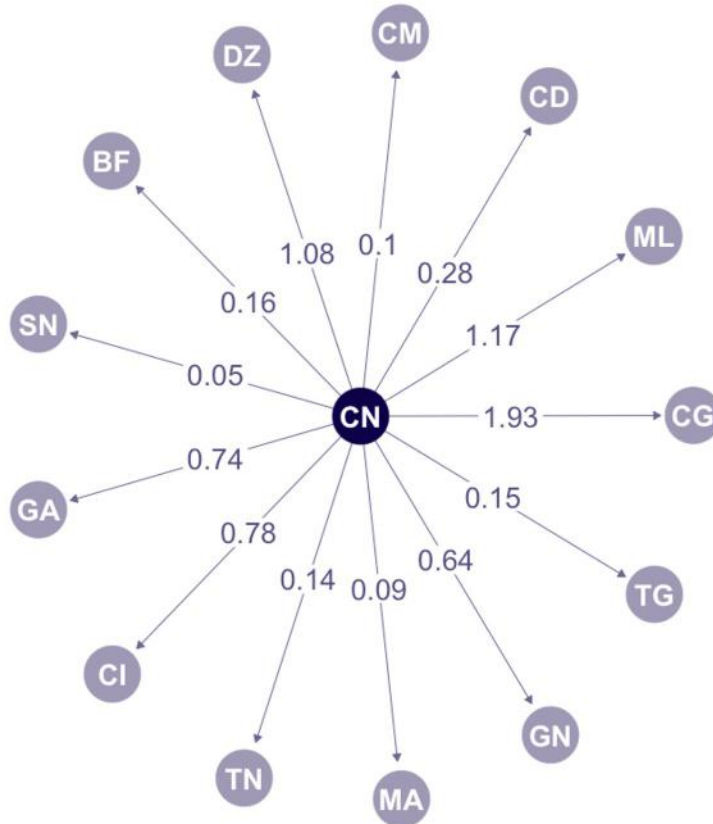
d. United States



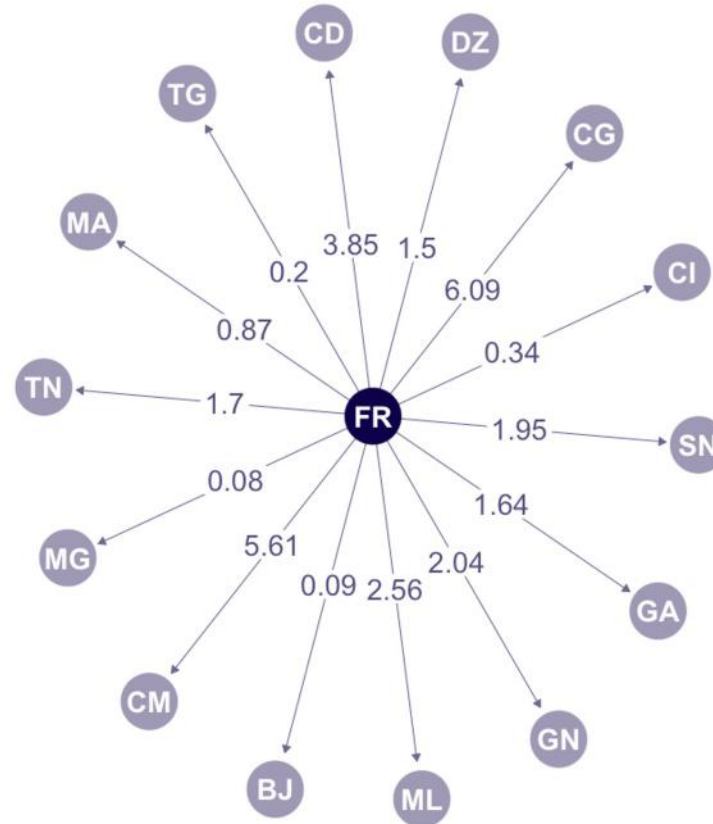
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# Global News Flows

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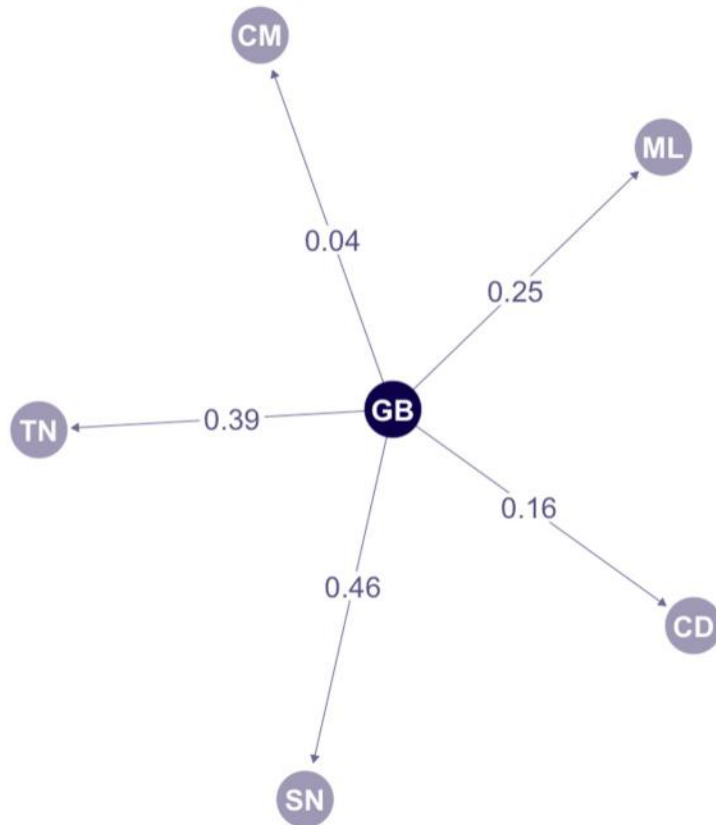


**Text reuse in African  
French-language  
media coverage of  
COVID-19**

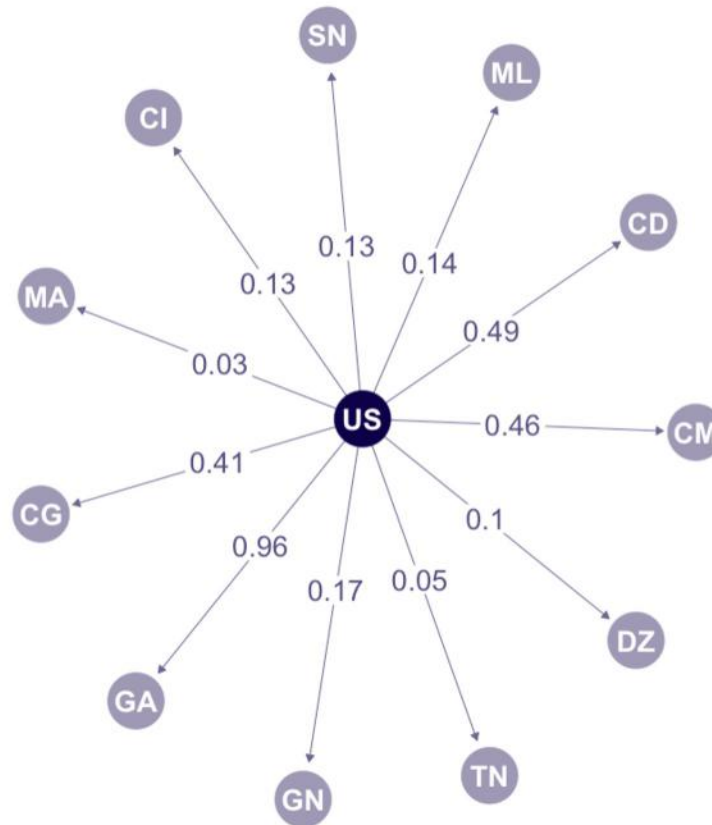


# Global News Flows

c. United Kingdom



d. United States



**Text reuse in African  
French-language  
media coverage of  
COVID-19**



# The limits of State-backed contraflows

- Micro-level failures
  - Poor project management
  - Technological failure
- Macro-level & systemic impediments
  - Competition with existing dominant players
  - Reliance on existing dominant players



The  
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Sheffield.

# Thoughts?