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## **Editorial**

### **International Journal of Digital Television**

**Volume 8, Number 2, 2017**

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Welcome to the second issue of 2017. This follows a number of guest-edited issues on topics as varied as TV formats, regulation of digital television, public service media, public broadcasting in Central/Easter Europe, and Indian television. The preceding special editions reflect the widening scope of the remit of this journal and map out some of the territory that could be explored. The expanding coverage of the journal is further evidenced by the next and last issue of this year (8.3) that will address the social and cultural questions surrounding social networking sites. The long-term goal is for the journal to be used as a platform for international and interdisciplinary approaches that open up new avenues for theoretically driven, historically inclined works. At the same time, the journal attempts to draw on scholarship adapting case studies and comparative analysis in the contemporary media and communication domain.

Central to the contributions in this non-themed issue is the continued importance attached to the public service provision and the medium of television in the era of technological convergence and unprecedented proliferation of media outlets. The five main articles cover a variety of issues, namely Italy and Spain's public service television provision of children's programming, terrestrial television licensing in Greece, public service values and their applicability to social media with the Finnish public channel YLE as a case study, the significance of the release of the 700 MHz band for Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) technologies in Europe, and the challenges facing television station B92 in Serbia. These articles also provide an assessment of the extent to which new media developments challenge business practices and change media consumption patterns. This mixture of critical work from across Europe reflects the revised aims of the *International Journal of Digital Television*: to address the social and cultural questions surrounding the future of television beyond digital switchover.

More specifically, issue 8.2 kicks off with the co-authored Alessandro D'Arma and Aurora Labio's analysis of the coverage of children's television by public service television broadcasters in Italy (RAI) and Spain (TVE). Assuming that children's television represents a crucial testing ground for wider debates about the distinctiveness of contemporary public service broadcasters, the piece addresses important questions concerning the provision and quality of the output of public service children channels in these Mediterranean countries. Research has shown that broadcasters in the Southern European region have historically struggled to maintain a distinctive public service profile and have been more vulnerable to commercial pressures than their counterparts in continental and Northern Europe. This original article adds to the body of research by exploring the results of a two-week analysis of the TV schedules of the main children's channels operating in the two countries. Not surprisingly, it finds that in both countries the output of public service children's channels is

distinctive only to a certain extent as there are discontinuities in public service provision including children's programming.

Irini Katsirea's article focuses on terrestrial television licensing in another Southern European territory, Greece. Oddly enough, private television channels in Greece have operated under 'temporary' licences since their inception in the early 1990s on the basis of legal provisions that had been declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Administrative Court of Greece. Following several (unsuccessful) attempts by successive conservative and socialist governments to put some order to this anarchy, a law was finally passed by the Greek Parliament on 24 October 2015, promising to put an end to this state of disorder by granting full licences to selected digital terrestrial television (DTT) providers. But the new legislation, proposing to grant only four ten-year licences through an auction procedure held by the Secretariat General of Information and Communication, proved extremely controversial and divided the current left-wing SYRIZA government and opposition parties. Alongside the arbitrary limitation of the number of licences to be allocated (which would result in reduced consumer choice and political pluralism, according to opposition views), another main criticism voiced against this arrangement was that it was unconstitutional as it bypassed the independent regulatory authority ESR. By contrast, the Greek government claimed that it was solely competent to regulate DTT licensing and that the Greek audiovisual market could not sustain more channels. Eventually the law was dropped, but this paper is important in discussing the impact of the continued uncertainty in the largely unregulated Greek broadcasting scene and the consequences on the industry, the profession of journalism and media freedom in Greece.

Jenni Hokka's article discusses the scale and form of social media services provided by public service companies from the perspective of the creative labour. Specifically, it asks: How do the workers perceive the public service values and their applicability to social media? How is the labour force adapting their practices from broadcasting to narrowcasting? The main challenges identified for public service companies are the most effective ways of reaching the audiences as well as producing valuable and spreadable content. The analysis shows that social media logic and especially the requirements of popularity that it entails has a particular effect on cultural and entertainment content that public service broadcasting outlets such as the Finish YLE produce. In essence, the workers must address the issue as to how to promote the public service content in social media. As it is mentioned, 'in drama production, the primary goal appears to be providing as rich, rewarding and continuing experience for the fans as possible, and to give them opportunities to be creative and interactive'. Yet, the article concludes that workers also identify possibilities to create fresh public service content through the lens of the social media.

In the fourth main article, Filomena Papa, Bartolomeo Sapio and Enrico Nicolò focus on the progress of the transition process to new Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) technologies in Europe and its connectedness to the release of the 700 MHz band. The authors are interested in providing valuable guidance to European regulators and policymakers concerning the ways to reduce costs and meanwhile promote citizens' uptake of new communication technologies. By adopting the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), this audience-led article investigates the behaviour of offline adult users during the DTT transition and their future expectations regarding TV services. The research uses a qualitative methodological approach, involving three focus groups consisting of adults who are non-

Internet users. The results confirm that user segmentation is crucial not only on the basis of socio-demographic variables, but also according to the definition of appropriate cultural models. What emerges, according to the authors, is segmentation in four micro-cultures: 'ideologically against'; 'inadequates'; 'enthusiasts'; and 'indigents'. The authors go on that 'segmentation can inspire different tactical interventions to encourage the adoption of digital media and different policy measures, such as communication campaigns, specific support modalities and economic incentives' and conclude 'in order to face the 700 MHz band transition process, it is advisable to carry out *ad hoc* qualitative surveys with the direct involvement of citizens'. In effect, this will contribute to suitable measures to be implemented in favour of the corresponding user segments.

The fifth and final main article examines how television station B92, once the most popular independent media in Serbia that resisted the Milosevic's authoritarian regime, is struggling to survive in a democratic society. Although it resisted the repression and censorship of the war regime, it was eventually weakened and lost popularity by the suppression of free speech or, according to the authors Dragan Stavljanin and Rade Veljanovski, by what could be considered 'market censorship'. B92 was forced into privatization because the international benefactors, who supported it during the Milosevic reign, scaled back their support on the assumption that in a democratic, competitive and market-driven ecology all media outlets should have equal chances to survive and grow. However, the authors contend that the case of B92 shows how an unregulated media market liberalization could result in commodification, commercialisation and the limitation of alternative voices, rather than an ideal 'marketplace of ideas' that would enhance democracy and promote critical investigative journalism.

Issue 8.2 also includes two Commentaries. Myra Moore discusses the push by Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) broadcasters to integrate broadcasting and unicasting and claims that this is critical to keep pace with the growing Internet Protocol (IP) content distribution over public networks. According to the author, one of the main goals of broadcasters in today's video ecosystem should be to effectively disseminate content and new services to all popular viewing devices. This can be achieved either by blending separate network transmissions (IP-delivered content and Over the Air broadcasting) to be received on a single device, or by placing IP-distribution capabilities at the core of DTT transmissions. In the second Commentary, Tom Evens discusses the extent to which live and exclusive sports TV rights have been considered an essential input resource, if not a 'killer application', for the growth of new communication technologies, including pay television consortia. As the author rightly mentions, 'sport's ability as a crowd puller is most convincingly shown in digital and pay TV markets across the globe, with BSkyB, Canal Plus, Foxtel and Star TV as notable examples'. But developments in digital distribution technology, such as high-speed broadband, have paved the way for traditional telecommunications companies, like British Telecom (BT), Telefónica and AT&T, to play a growing part within the television industry by competing directly with established pay TV broadcasters. These telcos have intensified competition by using premium sports rights to promote new pay TV services.

The variety of content from critical theoretical articles featuring in the current issue, to Commentary pieces of a more 'practical' nature from across the globe, outline some of the ground that could be explored in this journal. In practice though, the future direction of the

journal will depend on the feedback from editorial board members as well as the contributions that we look forward to receiving.