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International Journal of Digital Television (Issue 9.3; 2018)

Petros Iosifidis

Editorial

Welcome to issue 9.3, which is in fact the last issue of the *International Journal of Digital Television* under this title. Following extensive consultation with the Editorial Board Members it has been decided that the journal will be renamed *Journal of Digital Media and Policy* as of 2019 in order to reflect wider technological, market and socio-political changes on the global media scene. The renamed double-blind peer-reviewed journal will aim to analyse and explain the socio-cultural, political, economic and technological questions surrounding digital media and address the policy issues facing regulators globally. Content will be broad and varied, ranging from a mixture of critical work on technological, industry and regulatory convergence, to the emerging wider socio-cultural and political questions such as the application of online networks, the rise of cloud computing, and the internet of things.

Issue 9.3 hosts four articles and three book reviews. It kicks off with Gloria Dagnino's work 'Regulation and Co-Regulation of Product Placement for OTT SVODs: The Case of Netflix'. This article examines the policy practices used by tech giant Netflix, which is regarded as a global leader in subscription video-on-demand (SVOD), to disclose the presence, in its original contents, of product placement (PP) – that is the insertion of brands and products for promotional purposes. The author assesses Netflix's policies within the broader framework of the PP identification rules set for broadcast and Internet-based television by policymakers on both sides of the Atlantic: the US and the EU. Questions raised include whether Netflix has adhered to the requirements of the US and EU laws with regards to commercial communications. For instance, various stakeholders such as non-profit organisations, consumer advocacy groups and online communities of Netflix users have for some time been raising legal and ethical concerns over the extent and frequency of depictions of tobacco products in Netflix Originals. The piece concludes that the firm still falls short of adequately disclosing promotional insertions in Netflix Originals, the shows it commissions, produces and/or of which it is exclusive copyright owner. The article critically discusses the ways in which policy and ethical issues relating to Netflix and SVODs in general may be effectively addressed by fresh regulation (i.e. the upcoming amended Audiovisual Media Services Directive - AVMSD). In an era when streaming television has become commonplace, this valuable article calls for co-regulation as a feasible policy solution, and in particular the integration of the AVMSD-sanctioned rules, with a system of content descriptors implemented by over-the-top (OTT) television providers.

In her work titled 'Internet television at the local level: challenges in regulating online media' Aida Mantori Muntsant looks at media globalization with a local lens. The author acknowledges the economic significance of the current media landscape where big players provide content worldwide, but makes a strong case for the maintenance and support of broadcasters that cover local and/or regional issues. The article's objective is to highlight the phenomenon of Internet television at the local level and makes a case for regulating such services in a similar manner to local television channels. The Catalan case is given as a

representative example with a long tradition of local television services, where many broadcasters go online due to the lack of entry barriers to internet television market. The author argues that Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) has allowed content to be easily transportable and adaptable to the online era, but the new digital space raises challenges as to how to regulate and maintain the quality of public service media providers. In a context of globalization, the author contends, there is a 'relocalization' of television in which online projects respond to the need for local and specific content in the digital environment, but these channels should be regulated and mechanisms be adopted to guarantee their independence. True, local channels provide decentralization to the television model, but they should be prepared to innovate and be at the cutting edge of technological advances in order to offer a diverse and quality output.

Using the PEST analysis, the third article by Lilia Raycheva titled 'The Digital Notion of the Citizen-Centered Media Ecosystem' examines the political, economic, social, and technological aspects of the pros and cons in the media and communication landscape, based on practices and policies in a small Balkan state: Bulgaria. The author addresses important nation-wide questions, such as: Has there been a strong political and regulatory commitment to the fundamental values when developing new trajectories in the domains of technology, business and governance? Does the transformation of the business models meet Bulgarian customers' expectations for personalized interaction at all points of their consumer experience? Does the scaling up of citizen-centered technologies create serious societal challenges alongside opportunities for human progress? What is the overall impact of the technological developments on the Bulgarian society? Not surprisingly, the work comes up with mixed responses to these questions: 'in spite of positive developments, there is still no solid foundation in the country on which to test journalist's maturity and professionalism in providing informed choice to the voters'; although a diverse media environment has been formed, it has a serious deficiency in self-regulatory reflexes'; and 'the media world still cannot effectively implement pluralism as a major sign of journalistic independence'. The author highlights the importance of media and information literacy programs and initiatives on behalf of the government in order to effectively address the above issues. She also opts for the provision of high speed access to advanced public services and diverse multimedia content for work, training and entertainment.

The fourth and final article in this issue by Marta Albújar Villarrubia titled 'Don't Touch my Megahertz! Planning the Second Dividend in Spain Amid the Battle between Telecoms, OTTs and DTT Players', reviews the current European legislation and the Spanish government's plans for the implementation of the Second Digital Dividend in Spain. In this context, the work attempts to compare the spectrum optimization process in Spain with other European states and assess the technical, socio-cultural, political and economic consequences of the entire process for the Spanish audiovisual services and the various stakeholders. The findings are striking, for the Spanish plans for clearing the 700 MHz band are still undefined, whereas the cross-border coordination with neighbouring countries is insufficient. This lack of planning contrasts with some other European countries' level of definition and plans in proceeding towards the forthcoming release. The 700 MHz band will be auctioned in 2019, but it is yet to be decided where the funds will be directed. There are voices calling for these monies to be used to compensate the DTT players for the extra costs of

simulcasting, and/or the households for upgrading their equipment/infrastructures. There is also the whole question as to whether this scarce and public resource will remain public for television services, or whether the spectrum liberalisation process will strengthen the growth of pay TV consortia. One thing is certain: enhancing the quality of mobile communications will enforce further uses of audiovisual products through connected television or hybrid models, that will in turn offer new possibilities under the umbrella of the Internet of Things.