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EDITORIAL

Petros Iosifidis

Welcome to issue 10.2 of our renamed *Journal of Digital Media & Policy*. This follows special issue 10.1, with the theme 'Media and communication policies in a digital world', on the occasion of the journal's tenth year and its rebranding. The future facing theme of that special issue signalled the broadened scope of former *International Journal of Digital Television* that goes beyond digital television to incorporate emerging wider sociocultural, technological, regulatory and political questions. The current issue features five main articles by prominent academics that examine a wide spectrum of issues from various geographical contexts: independent television production in the UK; spectrum allocation policies in Austria; local radio news production in Scotland; interactive television; and digital media policies in West Bengal, India. It also features a very well-grounded long review of Shoshana Zuboff's book *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*.

Gillian Doyle's article 'Public Policy, Independent Television Production and the Digital Challenge' deals with a very important media sector both in economic and cultural terms: television production. In the UK, the growing prosperity of the programme-making sector can largely be attributed to policy interventions. UK regulator Ofcom published a review of the sector in 2015 that shows it performs well and regulation enables it to promote cultural diversity and creativity, foster new talent, and stimulate growth of small and medium size enterprises. However, the Ofcom report acknowledges that the tendency towards mergers and acquisitions has raised concern about the future of the UK independent TV production sector in a global ecology. In her work, Doyle shares this concern: she argues that a recent wave of corporate consolidation and takeovers, characterized by many leading UK production companies being bought out and often by US media conglomerates, has questioned the ability of the independent production sector to flourish in an increasingly globalized and competitive digital environment for television. The main point here is that trends towards consolidated ownership and the entry of powerful, commercial transnational platforms make it increasingly difficult to sustain indigenous television production and locally-made content. The article investigates the challenges raised for public policy as ownership structures in the UK television production sector adjust in response to new distribution technologies, digitalization and globalization and asks how public policy may need to be re-imagined for a rapidly evolving digital television landscape. In her thoughtful analysis, Doyle sees one potentially hopeful sign, that is, the emerging phenomenon of leading UK producers who, having collaborated with multinationals, now intend to set up their own creative enterprises. However, the author is sceptical as to whether such commercial initiatives can provide a turning point in the development of the UK's indigenous television production sector.

Stefan Gadringer, Ricard Parrilla Guix and Josef Trappel have written the next main article titled 'Spectrum allocation, media policy, and the key stakeholders' understanding of digitalization in Austria: A shift in the regulatory preferences from broadcasting to broadband'. Given the prominence of the economic imperative in media policies as well as the digitalization trend, the piece examines how much broadcasting is losing ground to broadband both as a privileged cultural form and a widely used form of electronic mass communication technology in Austria. Based on documentary analysis and interviews, the co-authored article addresses how spectrum policy, media regulation, frequency allocations, actions by key stakeholders, alongside political decisions have contributed to the substitution

of broadcasting by broadband as the main vehicle for the provision of mass communication in the country. The findings show that in the case of small-scale media Austrian market, resources are increasingly shifted to a new technological standard (broadband) without compensating the old standard (broadcasting), even though there is a clear political commitment for broadcasting and its content as valuable for society. The article points to another worrying broadcasting development in a market influenced by the much bigger German neighbor: Austrian broadcasting policy makers and regulators focused on promoting a strong public service broadcaster and implemented a dual broadcasting system very late, for the end of the PSB's monopoly and the digitalization process of broadcasting occurred almost simultaneously. This had adverse consequences for the PSB as a level playing field between the PSB and private broadcasters was never achieved. The authors claim that national regulators need to introduce and implement suitable policy measures to support broadcasting, including allocating more spectrum to reach various audience demands.

In their contribution 'Possible models of local news provision by radio in Scotland – a mixed methods study', Aleksandar Kocic and Jelena Milicev focus on a neglected area of media analysis: local radio. The authors argue that Scotland does not have any public service radio on a local level, apart from a few bulletins or programmes offered by BBC Radio Scotland on an opt-out basis. The piece acknowledges that Scottish commercial radio stations deal with issues of local interest, albeit within brief hourly news bulletins, without any in-depth coverage. True, the commercial sector is performing better than elsewhere in the UK, but the study found that there is lack of meaningful local news coverage by radio in Scotland, and even more importantly, lack of a mediated public space for a democratic debate on local issues that local radio provides. The trend towards deregulation, according to the authors, appears to have failed to deliver greater choice in radio listening, especially in speech-based, non-sports programming. We learn that, overall, community radio in Scotland lacks resources for any news coverage of its own. Based on a critical review of the literature relating to media's democratic role, and in particular the role of local radio, combined with interviews with stakeholders/ experts and focus groups with ordinary people, the article puts forward several possible solutions for future local news provision by radio in Scotland. The main point of this work is that, a suitable solution for radio to adapt successfully in the era of media market commercialisation and deregulation, would be for policymakers to take bolder steps towards increased funding for public service content in local media.

The next main article by Andy Fox, titled 'Interactive Television? A retrospective analysis of why red button content failed' examines the reasons as to why the interactive television experiment of the late 1990s and early part of this century did not prove successful. By adapting a content analysis conducted in the UK in the summer of 2012 on red button content supporting traditional broadcasters, the study found that 'the broadcasters stopped supporting interactive like applications after 2007, and before the data collection period in 2012'. According to the authors, 'evidence of this can be seen through the lack of supporting material, even for large scale events such as the Olympics and Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee celebrations'. This is a paradox, for television, technologically speaking, can bear the load of having multiple streams of text, audio and video running in parallel to the programmes that are appearing through the conventional broadcast channel. It also has the required resources, for example, with the ambitious BBC red button productions like *Walking with Beasts* (2001) and the periodic use of the red button to back up the *Test the Nation* series of quizzes. Instead, the authors argue that the reason largely lies with audience habits and acceptance. In particular, the likelihood to significantly enhance the audience experience conventional television viewing runs against interactivity: what the TV

viewer wishes to do is watch and not navigate. Therefore, the authors conclude, 'the conventional scheduled content and red button material designed to support a broadcast were uncomfortable bed-fellows'.

The last main article in this issue by Sushmita Pandit titled 'Public Policy and the Digital Deadline: The Implementation of Digital Addressable System (DAS) in West Bengal' deals with the implementation of mandatory DAS with strict, phase-wise deadlines for different provinces within India. This development has prompted a reconsideration of the television apparatus as well as broadcast policies, television industry, content and reception. According to the author, 'the introduction of Digital Addressable System can be posited within a series of similar public policies starting from the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) project in 1975 to the more recent UIDAI or Aadhaar project and Digital India campaign, all folded into the developmental rhetoric of the Welfare State'. The author argues that the rollout of DAS enables the exploration and the dynamics of the relationship between politics (the government), the market (which is preoccupied by neo-liberal tendencies) and digital technologies. The article focuses on West Bengal as a case in point to check the introduction of mandatory DAS both as a site of supremacy initiatives incorporating promises of neo-liberal advancement and of the incompatibilities that are inherent in them. The study investigates in what way various local stakeholders negotiate in this policy implementation and how DAS help to highlight a changing relationship between politicians, the market and digital technology. In terms of public policy, the work concludes that the claims of 'good governance', 'inclusive technology', and 'participatory development' in the policy papers appear to be hollow rhetoric.

Blayne Haggart's well-grounded long review of Shoshana Zuboff's book *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* does an excellent job criticizing Zuboff's book. It is perfectly scholarly, considerably more than an opinion article, and certainly fits in our rebranded academic journal. The reviewer acknowledges that the greatest value of Zuboff's volume 'lies in its presentation of the mechanics of surveillance capitalism, itself a special case of a more general knowledge-driven economy and society characterized by an emphasis on the commodification of knowledge'. However, Haggart has raised concerns about its quality of scholarship. In particular, he states that the book 'is not careful in its presentation of evidence', 'it chooses hyperbole over accuracy', and 'it fails to engage with the relevant literatures and critical voices that would challenge what ends up being a one-sided, almost existentially bleak argument'. I think it might be best to let the reader make an informed decision as to the book's contribution to scholarship. It would be great if a colleague (even Zuboff herself, once she had a chance to read the review) responded in a later issue with a similarly long article.

References

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