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EDITORIAL

Journal of Digital Media & Policy, Issue 11.1, March 2020

Petros Iosifidis

Welcome to issue 11.1 of our renamed *Journal of Digital Media & Policy*. This follows well-received special issue 10.3, with the theme 'Interfacing public communications in the digital economy', guest-edited by our Assistant Editor Michael Klontzas and Maria Sourbati. That special issue focused on the topical, albeit barely explored matter of digital interfaces, which enable the flow of information and data between media firms and their audiences. Such themed issues help to raise the profile of our rebranded journal and contribute to the body of knowledge by enhancing interdisciplinarity and examining under-researched topics which may be of interest to our readers and beyond. We intend to release a number of special issues focusing on various themes which relate to contemporary perspectives to enhance the scope of the journal, and for this reason we warmly invite potential guest-editors to submit their ideas to the journal editor.

The current issue features four main articles written by both junior and more senior academics that examine a wide spectrum of issues from various research backgrounds and geographical contexts: audiovisual policies in the European Union and an Estonian case study; broadcasting and spectrum wars in the small country of Ireland; digital switchover process in the less developed context of Nigeria; and citizen journalism engagement in Indonesian television. The first two articles pay attention to current European policy and governance developments and their interplay with market and technological change in an increasingly complex national/European hybrid media ecosystem. The third piece provides a critique of the neoliberal orthodoxy by presenting the interplay of interests between political and corporate actors in the Nigerian digital television environment, while the last essay studies the impact of citizen journalism in Indonesian television. With the kind permission of the House of Lords, the issue also features my response to the House of Lords Communications Committee Inquiry on 'Public Service Broadcasting in the Age of Video on Demand'.

We start with a piece by Ulrike Rohn and Henry Loeser, titled 'Policy Alignment in the European Audiovisual Sector: A Small Market Perspective from Estonia'. This well-thought paper proposes a new understanding of policy alignment, first by measuring the issue of policy alignment between policymakers and industry representatives, and then testing it by applying the concept to the small member state of Estonia and its audiovisual market. Through a multi-method approach involving documentary analysis and an online survey, the work confirms the findings by earlier research carried out in the area, i.e. that the Estonian audiovisual service providers view positively the predominantly economic benefits that the European Commission (EC) proposed in the recent reforms in the context of the Digital Single Market. The authors found that the values, needs and priorities of audiovisual industry stakeholders in Estonia were aligned with the liberal policy approach pursued by the EC. Such approach prioritizes the economic benefits of EC's policy reforms, while largely neglecting their socio-cultural benefits. Meanwhile, an interesting finding in this article is that the EC audiovisual policy, although primarily liberal in nature, may serve well the small audiovisual markets in the EU, including Estonia. But this can be achieved if the EC

communicates information about its strategies and policies to its stakeholders in a better and more proactively manner.

Kenneth Murphy's article 'Ireland, Broadcasting and the Spectrum Wars' provides an overview and a critique of Ireland's changing media landscape through the prism of the recent policy contestation surrounding the future use of the UHF spectrum and its implications for TV broadcasting. The piece explores the background surrounding the competition for spectrum resources and its implications for the role of free-to-view broadcasting and mobile broadband technologies in the future delivery of media and communication services. It uses a political economy and institutionalist approach to evaluate the extent to which the evolution of the Irish institutional framework regarding broadcasting and broadband development and the allocation of spectrum frequencies is shaped by broader political economic and political/institutional dynamics and what this means for broadcasting within the evolving digital media landscape. The main findings are, first, that public policy recognizes the value of the national free-to-air broadcasting sector, but lack of resourcing makes this a futile gesture. Second, the author observes an absence of political and institutional capacity to coordinate a local response to the converged media ecosystem and appreciate the socio-cultural value of the media. This contrasts sharply with the economic imperatives, power and resources dedicated to the mobile and broadband agenda. The author calls for the introduction of a more rigorous regulatory framework that could tackle the challenges facing digital broadcasting and public media in the Irish context.

The article by Femi Abikanlu investigates the challenges facing policymakers by implementing Digital Switchover (DSO) in the West-African country of Nigeria. The author elegantly presents the interplay of interests between political and business players operating within the political economy of the Nigerian digital television environment. The work uses two qualitative research methods, namely communication policy analysis and in-depth interviews, in order to shed light to the direction of policies and participants' experiences involved in the DSO process in Nigeria. The study argues that the implementation of the DSO process in Nigeria has been delayed because of a combination of factors: financial limitations, the exclusive approach to implementation, and policy-burdened intervention of the Nigerian Broadcast Commission (NBC). Contrasting with the cases of developed countries like New Zealand, Canada and the United States, in which the priorities of the state centered on the financial benefits that may accompany the transition programme to their respective national economies, in the case of most African states, including Nigeria, the DSO process offers a revived opportunity for the state to reconsider its audiovisual policies. For the successful implementation of the DSO process in Nigeria, the author calls for the Nigerian government, through the NBC, to allow a more open market-centered approach to policy and governance of the digital television ecology.

The fourth and final article by Asty Rastiya and Hendriyani focuses on recent developments of citizen journalism in television in the context of Indonesia, including broadcasting citizen programme and engaging in ongoing citizen journalism initiatives on two national commercial companies and three stations. The article uses a case study of Indonesia's *NET Citizen Journalism (NET CJ)* programme to investigate perspectives of citizen journalists about the impact of citizen journalism in television both on themselves and their profession, and on the wider society. By adopting a multi-method approach (a survey and interviews with active CJ members), the authors find that collaboration between citizen journalists and television networks ends up with a number of positive outcomes: democratization of information by allowing a wider range of people to share information and diverse views; positive shifts in citizen's surroundings; and self-development in terms of knowledge and skills in news video production. However, the study concludes that potential negative side-

effects regarding the involvement of citizen journalism in television might include the high risk of journalists' being sued by affected parties, as well as dissatisfaction about limited opportunities to have community videos broadcast on television. As the author acknowledges, citizen journalists place greater value on their stories being broadcast on television rather than simply being accessible through the website.

As aforementioned, the issue also features my response to the House of Lords Communications Committee Inquiry on 'Public Service Broadcasting in the Age of Video on Demand'. The Inquiry, carried out in 2019, was important and relevant as the successful UK Public Service Broadcasters BBC, ITV, C4, C5 and S4C are currently facing major challenges from Video on Demand (VoD) services. These challenges primarily concern competition for content from VoD services in a highly competitive broadcasting market characterised by shifts in audience behaviour. Audiences are watching less scheduled TV as they are attracted by the business model of global streaming services like YouTube, Amazon Prime Video and Netflix. Fierce competition from mainly US-based, unregulated global VoD players investing billions of pounds in content has escalated programming costs and made it difficult for tightly regulated PSBs with modest domestic UK budgets to compete. My submission is largely in favour of sustaining properly funded, universally available PSBs, who can deliver quality and original programming, alongside impartial and trusted news in the era of fake news and post-truth politics.