

Paper proposal for the international seminar, 'The audiovisual sector in the digital era: policies and strategies for diversity'.

### **Content Diversity in the Age of Multi-Platform Delivery**

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The UNESCO Convention of Cultural Diversity highlights the importance of pluralism and diversity in the modern world. Media diversity, the heterogeneity of media content, is considered a central pillar of a democratic society (Van Cuilenburg, 1999) but one which has seldom been studied in a systematic way (Picard, 2003). Recent technological developments and digital disruptions have added to the complexity of researching content diversity as media organizations have embarked on new forms of corporate expansion. Many television companies and print publishers have adopted the approach of transforming themselves into multi-platform suppliers of content (Doyle 2010, 2014). How have these strategies affected diversity of content?

Theorists including Anderson (2004) have highlighted the role of the internet in extending sales of less popular products. It is commonly assumed that growth of the internet and the rise of citizen journalism and UGC have impacted positively on diversity of media output. At the same time, digital technology has made re-cycling of content easier and contributed to a rise of 'churnalism', 'second-hand stories' and re-purposing of existing content (Freedman and Scholsberg, 2011). Indeed, multi-platform delivery may be encouraging a focus by suppliers on particular themes and types of content which stand out and travel well within a crowded landscape for consumers (Doyle, 2010). However, very few earlier studies have empirically investigated diversity across media platforms and sectors. Previous studies of programme diversity have tend to focus on a single sector or specific platform which somewhat limits their application in a cross-sectoral, cross-platform context.

This paper is borne out of initial findings from a study of media content being undertaken as part of a larger three year ESRC funded project 'Multi-platform media and the digital challenge' being embarked upon within the Centre for Cultural Policy Research (CCPR) at the University of Glasgow (The study commenced in July 2012 and is led by Gillian Doyle (Principal Investigator),

Co-Investigator Philip Schlesinger and Research Associate Katherine Champion). The research samples, codes and analyses the composition of content bundles from a selection of key case study media organizations drawn from broadcasting and the newspaper and magazine publishing industries including the BBC, STV, MTV, The Financial Times, The Telegraph, Elle UK, T3 and NME.

This paper presents initial findings from the first two of three phases of content analysis and reflects on both on the implications of the initial findings and choice of methodological tools. We find evidence of increasing volumes of content across the sample, but also of recycling and re-purposing of content and concentration on particular programmes or stories. The paper argues for the systematic examination of media content outputs and the development of new, but robust ways of measuring media content diversity across platform and sector.