
Mission impossible

Cross media communication, user-generated content &
the Digital Agenda for Europe

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What's this about?

- The aim is to detect – from EU point of view – what kind of environments are constituted within regulation that relate to production, consumption and distribution in online environments – with the Digital Agenda for Europe as case
- The aim is to inspect how processes of **convergence** and **cross-media communication** affect regulation and how **users** and **user-generated content** in digital participatory cultures are staged within these regulations
- Focus on cultural-, media-, and communication policy



Case & Method

- **Critical discourse analysis** (Fairclough) inspired by his three-dimensional framework – written language (as well as other semiotic expressions), discourse practice and instances of socio-cultural practice
 - Interdiscursivity and intertextuality
- **Case – The Digital Agenda**
 - The Commission’s Communication on **A Digital Agenda for Europe** and its ‘institutional road’
 - The Digital Agenda is an example of policy making that identifies and tries to react to regulatory convergence and cross-media communication



The Agenda

- The Digital agenda presented by the European Commission forms one of the seven pillars of the Europe 2020 strategy which sets objectives for the growth of the EU by 2020
- Life and work, entrepreneurship and innovation, science and technology, **telecoms and internet, content and media**
- Proposes to better exploit the potential of ICTs in order to foster innovation, economic growth and progress
- ‘The objective of this Agenda is to chart a course to maximise the social and economical potential of ICT, most notably the internet, a vital medium of economic and societal activity: for doing business, working, playing, communicating and expressing ourselves freely....(COM(2010 245 final/2)



The Agenda

- Main objective to create a digital single market in order to generate smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe
- Open up legal access to online content by simplifying clearance, management and cross-border licensing
- Telecommunication services should be unified – the harmonisation of services and spectrum bands
- Enhancing the interoperability of devices, applications, data repositories, services and networks
- Enhance digital literacy, skills and inclusion – by for instance applying the AVMS directive
- Leveraging smart use of technology for society (climate change, e-health, digitisation of content – mainly through Europeana)



Macro actors

- **The EU Triangle** –
 - European Commission (looks after the interests of the Union)
 - European Parliament (the voice of the people)
 - The Council of the European Union (the voice of the member states)
- Committee of Regions (CoR)
- The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)
- UN
- OECD
- WTO – GATS
- Regional commitments –Europe, Africa, Asia, Americas...
- ITU – International Telecommunications Union



Cross-media communications / convergence

- Multimodal, multichannel communications in a convergent media landscape
- Social media – as an example - are capable of acting as social networks, venues for publishing, for exchanging TV streams, live-cast...different semiotic expressions – audio, text, photos, videos...challenging notions of transmission, content, jurisdiction, dislocation, sender/user/audience, medium, platforms, public and private communications – as well as motives for regulation (Drucker & Gumpert, 2010)
- Convergence of communications and broadcasting technology via digitisation
- Infrastructure services such as Voice over Internet Protocol, Internet video distribution and Internet protocol TV blur the boundaries between Internet, telecommunications and television – necessitating changes in treating the regulation of each medium separately (Dwyer, 2010)
- What kind of environment does EU's regulatory framework set the users that actively engage in sharing, using, consuming and producing content?



Convergence - ITU

- ‘With digitization, content formerly dedicated to specific networks can now be conveyed on different infrastructures and delivery platforms.
- **This poses a potential conflict in regulation as different standards of content regulation are applied to telephony, sound and television broadcasting, print media and the Internet.**
- With convergence, policies may require change to achieve the common social objectives of promoting and protecting cultural traditions, public service, and protecting citizens from harmful material across all types of networks and delivery platforms’ (p. 13)



Theoretical frameworks

- **Van Dijck** – the ecosystem of connective media in a culture of connectivity / platforms as sociotechnical constructs and socioeconomic structures
 - Technology, users/usage, content
 - Ownership, governance, business models
- **Raboy & Padovani** – The complex ecology of GMP
 - The **global**
 - The **media** (interconnected convergence processes, interoperation of infrastructures (physical wires, cables, spectrum resources, software, codes, standards of interoperability), coexistence and use of different media platforms, institutional forms of media systems, media content, media uses)
 - **Policy** (a power game, the processes through which media and communication are regulated, number of related policy areas (economy, competition policy, trade, culture, development policy, policies to ensure equality...))



User-generated content

- **OECD** – A publication requirement, certain amount of creative effort, framed outside professional routines and practices, users add value to the work and motivation factors are connecting with peers, achieving fame, notoriety or prestige – and expressing oneself
- RW culture / RO culture (Lessig); making and doing culture / sit back and be told culture (Gauntlett)
- Producers (Burns), prosumers (Toffler), creative audience (Castells), interactive audience (Jenkins)
- Fantasy of participation (Dean), estranged free labour (Andrejevic), produsage/prosumer commodity (Fuchs)



User-generated content & cross media communication

- Platform distributing user-generated content is not an intermediary, but a mediator
- Platforms condition the participative potentials of users and tailor content in specific ways
- But platforms should not be taken out of economic and regulatory contexts



Digital Agenda – Commission’s Communication

- **Economically** and **socially** focused discourses
- Emphasis on the digital single market ‘...more uniform and technologically neutral solutions for cross-border and pan-European licensing in the audiovisual sector will stimulate creativity and help content producers and broadcasters, to the benefit of European citizens’
- Users not treated as empowered creative audience, but rather as disempowered citizens that need assistance to gain the necessary skills to be active contributors in economic sense:
 - ‘ICT cannot function effectively as a European growth sector and as a motor of competitiveness and productivity gains across the European economy without skilled practitioners’ and skills defined as ‘the digital skills necessary for innovation and growth’



Digital Agenda – Commission’s Communication

- On the **societal** front there is focus on bridging digital divides, on helping the disadvantaged to participate on more equal grounds emphasising eLearning, eGovernment and eHealth – trust and security, privacy, skills and inclusion
- No focus on the regulatory gap that many users of social media and platforms that enhance online participatory cultures are situated within, and the user-generated content that is being produced and distributed by these platforms
- The AVMS directive is specifically mentioned but that faces the same fate as many other regulatory acts within the converging, cross-mediated communication landscape – it risks being obsolete before implementation due to rapid technological and infrastructural developments



Digital Agenda – The other voices

- **Parliament**

- The need for a more coherent regulatory framework concomitant to processes of convergence and cross-media communications
- Economic growth and social added values, skills and trust in ICT's technologies and infrastructures
- Encouragement of participating in online environments – rather than being attentive to the consequences of such participative processes
- Calls for adaptation of the Data Protection Directive

- **EESC**

- Policy fields within ICTs and the Digital Agenda need to be unified and managed under a coherent plan of action
- Challenges concomitant with cross media communication and processes of convergence have been under policy focus for long time, without much success

- **CoR**

- The only body that identifies new participative platforms and interactive co-creation services in which users have become active players, producers and prosumers
- Maintains that it is essential to create an environment and culture of openness and trust to foster this development



Mission impossible?

- Discussion focused on users' potential violation of existing legal frameworks – rather than whether users themselves are being violated as consumers
- Technology moves faster than regulation, long negotiation process within EU and then implementation in different member states
- Transmission and content still treated through different frameworks
- Multimodal, multichannel communications in a convergent participatory media landscape still hovering between different regulatory frameworks
- Focus on the consumer, the worker and the citizen
- ..but what about the already skilled users and their user-generated content circulating within digitally mediated participatory cultures?

