

## Preface

This is the eighth RIPE Reader in the series published by Nordicom since 2003. The collection brings to fruition the proceedings and discourse in the RIPE@2016 conference that was sponsored by Vlaamse Radio- en Televisieomroeporganisatie (VRT) – the public service media organisation for Flanders, Belgium – in collaboration with two European research universities that are important in the field of public service media: The University of Antwerp and the Free University Brussels. The theme of the 2016 conference is captured in the book title, *Public Service Media in the Networked Society*. This theme was decided by the senior management of VRT and proved to be very timely, having great relevance for the future of public service media (PSM) in a global media environment that increasingly prioritises networked communications.

In Europe especially, PSM is mainly provided by legacy public service broadcasting organisations that were operated as monopolies for decades. The public service orientation is a defining feature of the heritage and landscape of media in Europe. Since the mid-1990s, a paradigm shift has been underway that is driven by advancing digitalisation, growth in competition from powerful global conglomerates, fragmentation of audiences and growing emphasis on consumerism and commercial interests. The transformation of public service broadcasting (PSB) into public service media (PSM) is a significant aspect of this paradigm shift because public sector media have played a leading role in establishing online services and developing new media platforms in Europe. Their investments and efforts have not always been rewarded. On the contrary, in recent years the commercial media industry has been pushing back aggressively. The stakes matter for every citizen in contemporary democracy because the future of relations between media and society depend on the roles, functions and orientation of media, which have decisive importance in the development of a network(ed) society. This book is about that.

The RIPE@2017 Reader is a valuable addition to a series that provides the most comprehensive treatment of developmental issues, defining challenges, and key trends affecting the conceptualisation, organisation, remits and practices of PSM in the twenty-first century. Over 18 years of cumulative results, the series of RIPE Readers

has become a primary source for analysis, insight and critical discourse in this field internationally. This series chronicles the ongoing development and disruption of the public service enterprise in media. Since the 2007 Reader, edited by Lowe and Jo Bardoel, advances in digitalisation and networked communications have been a focal interest, and thus we've been exploring the networked society framework. The RIPE@2017 Reader offers a pointed critical analysis of this concept and its social and operational implications for the public interest in media today. As editors, we are pleased with the quality of each and every contribution comprising this collection, and feel confident this eighth Reader meets the high standards of scholarship our community of academics and practitioners have come to expect from RIPE.

There are many organisations and individuals deserving of thanks. We begin with our colleagues at VRT and in the two universities who organised and hosted RIPE@2016. This required an enormous amount of work and considerable investment. On behalf of the participants, as well, our thanks for a memorable experience in both the depth and breadth of intellectual substance and the special enjoyment of the hospitality. It was another great 'RIPE Experience' on par with earlier conferences around the world. On behalf of the two universities, we are especially grateful for the invaluable contributions of Tim Raats who carried much of the load during the run-up to the conference when Hilde was in New York City and Karen was on maternity leave. We also thank three colleagues in particular who managed the project for VRT: Luc Rademakers, Veronique Rombouts, and Tomas Coppens.

The Conference Planning Group deserve rich thanks for their tireless efforts to ensure a successful result. We sincerely thank each of the members: Monica Herrero Subias at the University of Navarra in Spain (the forthcoming host for the RIPE@2018 conference), Hallvard Moe at the University of Bergen in Norway, Steve Paulussen at the University of Antwerp, Manuel Puppis at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland, Phillip Savage at McMaster University in Canada, and Bouziane Zaid at Al Akhawayn University in Morocco. We also thank the many colleagues and long-term RIPE community members who devoted their time and provided expertise in reviewing paper abstracts, suggesting ideas for developing the conference programme, and serving as panel moderators and workgroup Chairs and Deputy Chairs. We want to especially acknowledge two colleagues who proposed, organised and managed the first RIPE pre-conference event that brought together senior scholars in PSM with early career researchers – Jonathon Hutchinson at the University of Sydney, and Chris Wilson at RMIT University in Melbourne. They produced the ECR@RIPE event and it was a fruitful experience for everyone. On their behalf and for ourselves as well, much thanks to Minna Aslama Horowitz who helped prepare for the event and has made valuable contributions in building the Global PSM Experts Network, which supported the pre-conference.

We deeply appreciate our authors who have contributed quality research and thoughtful analyses to this collection. Thanks to each and all for your patience and for all the hard work necessary to fulfil the high standards of proper scholarship. The

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chapters were subjected to a rigorous peer-review process, and on the behalf of our authors and ourselves, we thank the many colleagues who helped with the peer review process. We trust our authors will agree that all of the effort has produced an excellent result that we hope every author will be proud of and pleased with.

Finally, we thank Nordicom for publishing and promoting the RIPE Reader series, and especially this book. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Ingela Wadbring who left Nordicom at the start of 2018 to pursue new opportunities. We wish her all the very best. She took the decision to open the entire series as free downloads in electronic form, which ensures this rich resource is available to researchers and educators all around the world. If you have not already, please visit the Nordicom website to download any Reader that might be missing from your personal library. In the current period of transition to a new leadership team, we wish the Board and our colleagues at Nordicom great continuing success.

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