# RIPE@2016
## 22 - 24 September 2016 in Antwerp and Brussels, Belgium

### *CALL FOR PAPER PROPOSALS*

# Public Service Media In a Networked Society?

We are pleased to announce the eighth biennial RIPE conference that will be hosted by the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Antwerp (U Antwerpen) in collaboration with the Free University of Brussels (VUB), and sponsored by Flemish public service broadcaster VRT.

The RIPE@2016 conference theme focuses on characteristics, dynamics and implications of a networked society for public service media [PSM]. In recent years, discussions about the changing media ecology and PSM's place and role have prioritised the notion of a networked society, enabled by digitisation and characterised by audience fragmentation and the interconnectedness of technologies, communities, media practices and companies. The emerging ecology is highly disruptive to market structures and modes of communication in the mass media era. The concept and practices associated with networked communications in a networked society are celebrated, but merit critical scrutiny.

How real is the 'networked society' in established and emerging media economies? What indications are there that a networked society expands or lessens PSM's role? How can PSM strengthen the democratic potential of networked communications and counter disruptive forces, and be seen to do that? What are the roles of commercial and non-commercial media organisations in a networked society, and how do these roles intersect – or not? Which aspects of legacy public service institutions and traditions can and should be preserved, and what appears to be no longer useful. What new roles can and should PSM take on? Why is increased collaboration with other public institutions and also private companies necessary for PSM? What indication are there that PSM should and could become a central hub for public services in media, or another node in decentralised networks, or a remedy for market failure, or that public service provision should be left to alternative grassroots initiatives and distributed forms? What are the main lines of development and challenge for PSM in regions and countries where various projects and processes are working to create PSM where it did not exist before – particularly in the Global South? Does the networked society notion have a bearing in those cases? Are there models, practices and solutions of potential importance for PSM in the Global North? How do the two halves intersect and where are the most significant disconnects with regard to PSM in the context of networked societies?

Our theme has many dimensions that open PSM discourse to analysis and critique about relations between traditional and new media, institutional and non-institutional actors and approaches, forms of journalism and news provision, characteristics and dynamics of social networks in connection with PSM, and all of this across a broad range of stakeholders that include government, NGOs, other public institutions, commercial media, and most importantly the public as audiences, users, creators, citizens, activists, consumers, owners, etc. Our theme has implications for the role of PSM with regard to digital divides around the world, and expansive as well as critical

treatment of publicness as a concept and in practice. Comparative work is needed to explain both the specifics of PSM in countries of varying sizes, political traditions and market structures, and commonalities and their implications.

The following topics will comprise the workgroup structure for this conference:

**1. PSM's roles and functions in a networked society**
- Analyses and critical insight of policy instruments that support the networked society concept and its practical development.
- Insight into how PSM is understood in the networked society context (e.g. as a hub, a node, a key institution, irrelevant, and emerging models).
- Discussion of wider changes in societies and media systems with a focus on the implications for (divergent) views on the roles and functions of PSM.
- Clarification of PSM's institutional roles and functions in a networked society that merit deeper consideration by policy makers and researchers.
- Trends in regulation, governance and accountability measures that are specific to understandings of PSM in a networked society.
- Assessment and critique of operational strategies to increase collaboration between PSM institutions and other actors.
- Aspects, elements and realities of PSM as a *non-networked* entity or practice

2. **PSM and the public in a networked society**
- Analyses and insight about dimensions of public involvement with PSM in the networked society context (participation, engagement, interaction, alternative, collaborator).
- Insight about modes of address and implied identities (audiences, users, citizens, consumers, creators, etc.) with implications for developing PSM theory and operational practice.
- Recommendations for how to build better, stronger, and deeper relations between PSM and its publics, as well as limitations and threats.
- Opportunities and limits on PSM efforts to serve diasporic, ethnic and immigrant communities (usually minorities) in a networked society.
- The position of PSM in the media choices of a networked audience that uses both linear broadcast and non-linear broadband channels.
- Critical analysis of methods for defining and measuring PSM audiences that address concern about whether new digital metrics yield a better understanding of PSM's role.
- The role of networks and online communication for ensuring PSM accountability.
- Complications and barriers in cases and aspects where PSM is not networked

3. **PSM and partnership in a networked society**
- Critical examination of vested interests in various social formations that support or resist the networked society.
- Clarification of winners and losers in the development of networked societies, with particular emphasis on implications for PSM.
- Clarification of the multiplicity of stakeholders, significant contradictions, important aspects where they agree, and what this means for relationship 'management' in PSM today:
  - Commercial media
  - Cultural organisations

- o  Other public institutions
- o  Organisations representing minorities, movements and communities
- o  International actors in varied sectors (lobbies, NGO's, associations, etc.)
- o  Grassroots movements and activists
- o  Policy makers
- Stakeholder management practices, problems and development in relation to higher requirements for PSM accountability and renewed legitimacy.
- Research on co-creative audiences / users in PSM today that yields fresh insights about what is being done, how well, with what results, and where significant barriers remain.
- Scholarship on collaboration, partnership and value chain networks for PSM.

### 4. **PSM and journalism in a networked society**
- Examination of the character, dynamics and conditions for professional journalism in the networked society, and the implications for PSM.
- Opportunities and problems in collaborative news and citizen journalism.
- Clarification of diverse options for PSM's role in news provision – as producer, distributor, gatekeeper, facilitator, convener, platform, moderator, etc.
- Links between legacy media and social media in PSM news operations today.
- Trends, concerns and benefits in the pursuit of cost-cutting measures that include outsourcing, downsizing and freelancing in journalistic employment.
- Pros and cons of entrepreneurial journalism in the context of PSM.
- Changes in PSM news production keyed to user-generated content and audience feedback.
- Analyses and critique of how PSM is affected by the 'media economic crisis' and what that means for journalism and quality content.

### 5. **PSM in small versus large (networked) societies**
- Significant challenges and comparative dynamics in doing public service media in societies of various sizes, especially smaller societies, and in both institutional and non-institutional forms.
- What small and large mean and imply in the context of the networked society.
- Comparative findings about of assets and liabilities for small and large societies.
- Vulnerabilities and opportunities for small (networked) societies beyond Europe and at different levels of service provision.

### 6.  **Implications of power in networked societies for PSM**
- Gatekeeping processes in networked societies and the affects on PSM, especially regarding inclusion and exclusion.
- Changing structures and dynamics in holding and wielding power, with implications for PSM.
- The exercise of power related to developmental challenges for PSM in the Global South, especially.
- Opportunities and limitations for PSM development as a consequence of empowerment.
- Old and new pressures on PSM's institutional autonomy and editorial independence in the networked society context.
- Issues and constituencies for PSM accountability in the networked society.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Paper proposals will be peer reviewed and must adhere these format specifications:
On the first page:
- ✓ Paper's working title
- ✓ Author(s) name, organisational affiliation(s), location(s), e-mail of contact author
- ✓ Specification of 2 topical areas (as noted above) in which the paper has Author(s) can indicate personal preferences.

On a separate second page:
- ✓ Paper's working title, excluding the author(s)' identification
- ✓ Extended abstract (max 750 words) explaining the paper topic and how it contributes to conference theme
- ✓ Repeat the two topical areas also specified on p.1

Please submit your proposal as a MS Word file at www.ripeat2016.org (Note: this is NOT the general RIPE website, but a dedicated website for the 2016 conference.

All submissions will be peer-reviewed (double-blind) by a scientific committee. The evaluation criteria are:
1. Relevance to the conference theme and fit with one or more topical areas
2. Conceptual and analytic quality (beyond a descriptive treatment)
3. Relevance to PSM management and practice
4. Comparative research is highly desired
5. Clarification of methodology if the paper will report on empirical research
6. Generalisability of insights and findings

Empirical research is highly valued, but we also welcome insightful philosophical, critical and theory-driven papers.

RIPE conferences focus on substance, dialogue and results. We therefore limit acceptance to about 60 papers. Each paper is assigned to a workgroup. At best we assign 9-12 papers per group so every paper has sufficient time for presentation and, importantly, discussion.

**Submissions are due 15 February 2016.**

**Decisions on acceptance will be announced on 28 March 2016.**

**Completed papers must be submitted on 1 August 2016 via www.ripeat2016.org**

The conference happens over 2.5 days with a welcoming reception the night before the first day. The conference language is English.

Conference fees will be announced at a later date. A discount for PhD students is planned. Registration fees cover costs for conference meals, events and materials but do not include accommodation or travel. A non-obligatory social programme might be planned for the day after the conference. If so, it would be an additional cost. The RIPE conference does not supplement personal travel costs.

The RIPE initiative publishes a selection of the best papers in a peer-reviewed book handled by NORDICOM publishers.