

# The Consequences of the Digital Broadcasting for Content Production

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## SUMMARY

*The development of digital broadcasting is often defined as technological necessity, in terms of technological determinism. However an analysis of media and technology development should use a number of paradigms to define the relevant processes and changes and to provide in-depth insight into the causes and effects of the introduction of such wide-ranging changes, affecting whole societies and not just particular groups or individuals. The digital broadcasting namely poses a problem of defining the reasons for its introduction. We are posing a question how it affects the content production and quality and what advantages it actually offers. Our aim is to define the advantages of digital broadcasting and its problems and to check the digital broadcasting policy through different paradigms. We want to define advantages of digital broadcasting for its users and for producers of media content, and for this purpose we use different paradigms (conflict, evolutionary etc.) with case study of Slovenia (analysis of key documents, regulation and processes, as well as in-depth interview with the key actors in Slovenia). We find out that a number of supposed advantages are not really seen by a number of important actors, including public and broadcasters, as indeed important advantages. Analysis of development in the European Union, as well as in Slovenia shows that introduction of digital broadcasting faces important economical and productional questions, including adequate increase of content production as well as enhancing content quality and content specialisation, however these questions are not adequately answered or raised.*

Key words: digitisation, content production, regulation, specialisation of media

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## Introduction

The development of new information and communication technology (ICT), often labelled also as “new media” (Boyd-Barrett & Newbold, 1996), has provoked a number of changes in the media landscape, but also in wider society as a whole. Although new media clearly had impact on modern society and democracy, however, there still hasn't been reached consensus about the nature of its role. Ambiguity of these new technologies and media which is “enabling as well as defining and leaves opportunities of choice within certain limits” (Van Dijk, 1996: 43) continues. The question where these limits are placed therefore remains one of the most important questions of any particular technology, media and society.

We must not forget that the changes that are taking place within the established and emerging media communication systems are only initiated by technological innovations (new production technology, new information delivery and interaction systems, new consumer devices) but they are (still) governed by “social and economic factors and especially by general changes in the consumers' use of media” (Teljas et al., 2007: 6). We are often faced with discourse of technological determinism, as if technology is by imposing itself upon the society by itself, and new media and technologies are no exceptions. However, there are numerous and pervasive ways in which a society has a profound influence upon its media, which in the end become the products of political, legal, and other social forces, and it is these forces “that determined which technologies survived and how they were developed into media systems” (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1988: 329). These social and economic factors, as well as consumers' use of media, therefore influence or define the limits of choice also in the application, use and success of new technologies and media.

One of the main development in the media and technologies in the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century is the introduction of digitisation and digital television. The process of digitisation is supposed to bring advantages to all groups of participants (e.g. *Agency for post and electronic communication*, 2009). Advantages for providers: lower transmission costs, convergence of services, possibility of content differentiation. Advantages for the state: more efficient use of the frequency spectrum, use of the freed part of the spectrum for new services. Advantages for consumers: enhanced image and sound quality, new services for people with special needs and the elderly, but most of all greater choice of content and more television and radio stations.

Digitisation, however, also brings a number of new questions and dilemmas. The introduction of digitisation which supposedly offers greater choice of channels will increase the demand for content for these channels. One of the questions that occur is who will provide this content and how will supply follow the increase in the media content demand. The increase in the demand for media content will also put additional pressure on content producers, including journalists and editors. There is an important question whether this increase in the media offer is sufficiently covered by media resources and personnel. But the first question is whether the question of content was adequately approached and raised in the first place, or was the introduction of digital television seen as technological process

and issue, without consequences for content and producers, including journalists and editors.

The intention of this paper is to look at the ways digitisation and digital television is introduced into the society and economy, to see the rationale for it and the clues to its success or failure. We will examine its purposes and policies included in its introduction to the market and the society as a whole. For this purpose we will combine different qualitative methods: analysis of key documents, regulation and legislation, with the emphasis on case study of Slovenia, political-economy analysis of the processes that led to the introduction of digital broadcasting as well as in-depth interviews with some of the key actors in the process of the implementation of digitisation in broadcasting. The main hypothesis of this paper is that the plurality of channels doesn't automatically bring plurality of sources and content. We also argue that the introduction of new ICT and new media is a result of a mixture of political and emotional factors, and that the cognitive factors of economy, quality and efficiency are secondary to the before-mentioned factors.

In the first chapter of this paper we will present theoretical background with analysis of the development of digital broadcasting in some of the countries. Findings of the case study of Slovenia's introduction of digital broadcasting will be presented in the next chapter, and then discussed in the context of their broader social dimensions.

### **Theoretical Background: Different Paradigms**

It is clear, as stated by DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, that "our newest technology will or will not be transformed into systems that come into wide use because of the influence of the family, the political system, economic considerations, schools, the requirements of the military, and other conditions that have also shaped our present-day mass media systems" (1988: 348). The definitions of these crucial conditions depend upon the point of view and the use of different paradigms or processes. A number of paradigms are relevant to this question: structural functional paradigm, conflict paradigm, evolutionary paradigm, symbolic interactionist paradigm, and cognitive paradigm (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1988): from the point of view of structural functional analysis, the technologies that should survive and prosper as media systems are those that serve societal needs for stability, integration, and efficient production. The conflict paradigm on the other hand claims the technologies that will develop into mass communication systems are those that result from the clash of powerful groups. There is a dialectical process of conflict between groups going on, where each group is promoting the system that best serves its economic and political interests. From the perspective of the evolutionary paradigm, technologies that best serve the adaptation needs of our society will develop into new media systems. For example, as our society becomes more and more complex, it is increasingly difficult to hold it together with traditional model of interpersonal and mass communication; thus new media systems will have to be developed to fill this void and ensure survival. The symbolic interactionist paradigm also sensitizes us to questions of change, but the concern is more with individuals than with the societal or global concerns of evolutionary theorists. A major

consideration for a symbolic interactionist would be how well new media systems assist individuals in their collective efforts to create meaning in an ambiguous and changing world. Finally, the cognitive paradigm draws attention to the effects of new media systems upon individuals' beliefs, feelings, and behaviour. Presumably, those technologies that have »desirable« effects, as judged by the individuals themselves and by power holders, are most likely to be developed into communication systems (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1988: 350–1).

There are constant declarations that the content of new media systems has to be made to parallel more closely the interests, needs, and personal goals of large numbers of ordinary citizens, and at the same time remain financially viable, and that developers of new technologies who design communication systems that serve individuals' understanding dependencies are most likely to survive and succeed. Broadcasting regulatory authority for Berlin and Brandenburg in Germany for example recently stated that it is necessary to take up "opportunities provided by digital technology to serve the interests of consumers, and initiate new developments" (Mabb, 2008: 5). This concern for users' interests was expressed already at the early stage of the process of specialization, in 1988: "The challenge for developers of new technologies is to design media systems that not only serve individuals' understanding, orientation, and entertainment goals, but do so in a way that is superior to more traditional media alternatives. It is not easy to 'build a better mousetrap'." (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1988: 349) Concern for users' needs and interests is also present in the concept of 360° News, where multimodal and multifunctional connectivity is offered by media and telecommunications networks, all with the intention of enhancing users' gratifications (Wishwanath, 2008). Users' needs and perceptions are at the centre of key media and technology trends, as researched by Teljas et al. (2007). However, according to recent users' feedback to the introduction of new media and technologies such as digital broadcasting, the task to "build a better mousetrap" has still not been successfully fulfilled.

New digital technologies are supposed to change the nature of mass media from a process of "pushing" bits at people to one of allowing people (or their digital devices) to "pull" at them. However it seems that this process is present only in the area of technological devices and their possible uses, and not in the area of technology and media policies and regulation. There, a number of authors warn that old-way of pushing policies is still predominant or even becoming stronger, in spite of publicly declared policy of liberalization and deregulation (e.g. Freedman, 2008; Galperin, 2004). Indeed, question occurs, "Can technical needs dictate cultural and public interests?" (Milosavljević, 2008), or, to be more precise, can political wishes, masked as technical needs, dictate cultural and public interests?

As has already been noted by DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach in 1988, in the case of videotext, "a key social factor in the development (...) is the receptivity of governments to new media systems" (1988: 347). This seems to be the case with the development digital broadcasting. If the analysis of digital broadcasting comes only from the perspective of users' interests and gratifications, using not only symbolic interactionist paradigm, but also evolutionary paradigm and cognitive

paradigm, there is no clear conclusion about the reasons for the introduction of both technologies and its' related media.

One of the main advantages of digital broadcasting is the decrease of needed frequency spectrum for individual channel, thus multiplying the number of available channels within the same frequency area and through this also multiplying the number of channels, available to the audience.

However concerns about the true value of attraction of these additional technological capabilities and supposed advantages of digital broadcasting were also raised almost from the beginning. There is a question of public interest of this proliferation of channels and policy that supported it; namely, economic analysis shows change resulting in a reduction, not increase, in programme numbers is "typically good for viewer welfare" (Seabright & Weeds, 2007: 74). Another relevant question from the beginning was not the quantity of available channels but the quality of available programmes on the channels. This question occurred in larger media landscapes as well as in smaller ones (Milosavljević & Bašić-Hrvatin, 2000): is the main problem of broadcasting and media really the quality of the picture or the number of channels, or is it the question of programme quality? Is it then the question of "how" or »what« we are watching?

Even before the development of digitisation, the answer seemed clear: "The problem here is content, not cost" (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1988: 349). Similar concerns were expressed at the start of digitisation of broadcasting: "Everybody assumed that increased image quality was the relevant course to pursue. Unfortunately, this is not the case. There is no proof to support the premise that consumers prefer better picture quality rather than better content." (Negroponte, 1995: 38)

Even without further questions of sustainability of an economic model, based on specialisation, fragmentation and individualisation (for more see Lowenstein & Merrill, 1990), the proliferation of the number of media has limits. With these physical and economical limits in mind, it comes as no surprise then that key regulatory authorities even in some of the best-developed media landscapes came to the similar conclusion: the specialisation and proliferation has already reached its limit. German media authority for Berlin and Brandenburg states: "Today, growth regarding the number potential consumers has almost come to a standstill" (Mabb, 2008: 38). And chairman of British regulatory body Ofcom declared that "in content provision the evidence is that the market has reached a plateau" (Currie, 2008).

The question that naturally occurs is: if we have reached saturation of media channels, why are we still facing new media and technology developments in these areas? Which are the driving forces that push forward these media and technologies? Increasing individualisation of specialized media channels exemplifies the evolutionary paradigm and it's care of adaptation needs of increasingly complex world. But if we use symbolic interactionist paradigm, we must ask the question how well new media systems assist individuals in their efforts to create meaning. And from structural functional paradigm, we must ask how well these new technologies serve societal needs. Considering conflict paradigm, we must consider which powerful groups shape media and technology policies and implementation.

Even though “Added digital value” is “an absolute condition for the often-quoted ‘market-driven’ analogue-digital switchover” (Mabb, 2008: 25), no real added digital value has been found, at least not such that would popularize digital broadcasting with either audiences/citizens or broadcasters. Even regulatory authorities warn that it is “more difficult to define any additional value for consumers from the start” and that the second challenge is “convincing consumers to take out a subscription (...) to pay for contents which are also available free of charge” (Mabb, 2008: 35). The same scepticism is present on the part of broadcasters and potential users of frequency spectrum (Mabb, 2008: 33) and can be found also in the reactions and warnings from regulatory bodies from other countries, such as United Kingdom (Galperin, 2004; Freedman, 2008).

Again we are facing with the problem of the quality of the content. Today broadcasting authorities, responsible for digital broadcasting, complain that “there is no major investment in programme development” (Mabb, 2008: 23). With all this problems taken into account, it is unclear how regulatory authorities can still at the same time claim: “Consumers and their interests as the core function presented the basis for the switchover of terrestrial TV transmission” (Mabb, 2008: 25).

Not even structural functionalist analysis with its emphasis on the success of those technologies and media that serve societal needs for stability, integration, and efficient production can then explain why technologies and media related to digital broadcasting did develop and become so heavily promoted and implemented in different international regulation and policies, from USA to European Union as a whole and now to individual countries. The only social actor that seems to stay enthusiastic with the introduction of these new technologies seems to be politics and manufacturers. The only paradigm left to (try to) explain the rise of digital broadcasting seems to be the conflict paradigm which explains the development as a result from the clash of powerful groups, namely politics and manufacturers.

A number of researchers and authors warn that digital broadcasting was developed as a result of intense international political and manufacturing interests, involving conflicts between different countries such as Japan, USA and European Union, national interests, but also political interests and not just rational, cognitive reasons, but emotional (involving national pride and personal decisions by national leaders) reasons as well (Negroponte, 1995: 39–48; Galperin, 2004: 25–52; Freedman, 2008: 171–197).

This brings forward the key question of the introduction of digital television: “(R)arely has the fundamental question *why digital?* been asked of or fully answered by those leading the transition” (Freedman, 2008: 171). It seems indeed that digital switchover was, at least for economically and politically stronger countries such as USA and United Kingdom, “an essential ingredient of their industrial policy perspectives as they seek to answer the challenges of globalization and increased international competition” (Freedman, 2008: 184).

However their individual decisions, based on (supposed) national interests of greater competitiveness and efficiency, soon achieved (wished-for) spill-over effect and digitisation was introduced into a number of international decisions, regulations and policies, including European Union. There, however, problems occurred, particularly in smaller and economically weaker countries (and not just

new, post-socialist member countries) who, like much stronger Germany, still search for either economic or social and cultural advantages. Here, just like in United Kingdom, the only thing that is clear about the introduction of these new technologies and media is that “costs and benefits remain unclear” (Freedman, 2008: 182).

### **Case Study: Slovenia**

This case study includes a combination of different qualitative methods: analysis of key documents, regulation and legislation, with the emphasis on case study of Slovenia, political-economy analysis of the processes that led to the introduction of digital broadcasting (for more see, DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1988) as well as in-depth interviews with some of the key actors in the process of the implementation of digitisation in broadcasting. In methodological literature, it is widely recognized that, if handled properly, in-depth interviews are the most likely way to get in-depth information about the feelings, experiences and perceptions of research subjects (Schutt, 2001). We conducted an in-depth interview with four main participants actively involved in the preparation and adoption of digital broadcasting regulation as well as in the production of broadcasting content. Interviews were conducted individually in the Slovenian language, lasting about one hour per person. For better understanding and coherence of the paper, the results of political-economic analysis and in-depth interviews will be presented in the paper in a combined manner.

### **Slovenian Broadcasting Situation**

In terms of quantity of media outlets in general and television stations in particular, the media landscape in Slovenia is well developed. There are currently more than 1272 media outlets registered in Slovenia (*Razvid medijev*, 2009), including 36 television and 96 radio stations.

The main limit put on the television, but on other media markets as well, is the size of the country and its population. Since Slovenia is a small country with population of only two million, it does not have natural preconditions for huge quantity and diversity of stations and channels that would offer attractive and/or high quality of programming. Even more, it doesn't share the language with any larger country that would give the domestic channels and production the opportunity to offer programming to wider audience. Therefore the domestic television stations have to compete on a very small market. This has not crippled the quick rise of the number of the stations and channels, mainly in 1990's due to very liberal policy of media and broadcasting regulation. However, this saturation has important, mostly negative consequences for the quality and variety of channels and programmes.

The saturation and a small market means that, in spite of the fact that there are 36 television stations, there are more or less just two strong players according to market shares, turnover and ability to adopt new digital technologies. These are public service broadcaster RTV Slovenia (RTV SLO) and commercial broadcaster Pro

Plus, which produces channels *Pop TV* and *Kanal A* and is owned by American company Central European Media Enterprises (CME). RTV SLO is the largest media company in Slovenia, with a turnover of € 109.8 million. It is followed by Pro Plus, with the turnover of €40.5 million.

A number of specialized channels broadcast, such as *Čarli* (popular music), *Petelin* (folk music), *Šport klub* (sports), and *Info TV*, 24-hour news channel. Most of these specialized and other general commercial channels are relatively unimportant, both in terms of influence and advertising revenue, since they achieve low ratings. Because of their economic power (estimated value of *Telekom Slovenije* is €3,3 billion; Cerar, 2007. Net profit in first half of 2007 was €46,3 million; Polanič, 2007) and technological development, telecommunication companies can (and probably will) become important actors in the area of digital television, even more than most of Slovenian television stations. The telecommunication companies already offer online news and other content for mobile telephone subscribers. It is, particularly because of well-developed mobile, telecommunications and other technologies, quite surprising that Slovenia is lagging behind when it comes to adaptation of digitisation of television. Digitisation is mostly present as digitisation of transmissions and other changes in production. It has so far reached only 1 per cent of households: 2000 households have access via cable (DVB-C) and 5000 households have access via broadband (DVB-H) This is low compared to average penetration in total European Union, which is 23,7 per cent (European Commission, 2006). The set-top-boxes, suitable for the Slovenian viewers, have only recently appeared in Slovenian stores. Previously, there were not any MPEG-4 set-top-boxes available and some retailers promoted those for MPEG-2 as a way to digital television. In the first year the first national DTT network reached coverage of around 60 % of Slovenian population. However, there is still no data on the Slovenian DTT penetration and, acknowledges Agency for Post and Electronic Communications (hereinafter: APEK), “we probably wouldn’t miss too much if we’d dare to say that it is around zero” (Agency, 2008).

### **The Introduction of Digitisation**

The Broadcasting Council called already in its report for 2001–2002 for a development strategy for radio and television channels to be drafted, to clarify how many channels are actually needed in Slovenia to satisfy the needs of the public. The Council’s report assumed that in two or three years it would be practically impossible to find new frequencies for television analogue broadcasting, a prediction that subsequently proved to be accurate. To resolve this situation, the Council proposed that Slovenia should turn to digital technology.

First warnings about relevant regulation of digitisation were published already in 2000 (Milosavljević, Bašić-Hrvatini, 2000: 255): “The non-regulation of Slovene private broadcasting shows that regulation is the only option if we want to provide society with at least some variety of content and some variety of sources.” The situation in Slovenian broadcasting at that time showed that “the increase of available channels does not automatically mean the increase of content and source variety” and that “there is no true, internal pluralism, pluralism of content, sources

and different approaches. And there is no reason to believe that digitisation will bring an end to this” (Milosavljević, Bašič-Hrvatín, 2000: 255).

Within a Directorate for Electronic Communications at the Ministry of Economy, *The Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia for the switchover from analogue to digital broadcasting* (hereinafter: The Strategy) was prepared and accepted by the government in February 2006. It foresaw three networks to be set up for digital broadcasting with simultaneous broadcasting in both analogue and digital technology and then a gradual exclusion of analogue transmitters and releasing of frequencies for the adjustment of the next multiplexes.

All national and regional channels of the public RTV SLO are placed on the first multiplex MPN-A. However, in August 2007, APEK announced a public call for three additional channels in the first multiplex, in which RTV SLO was already broadcasting its two national channels. There was no public tender for channels on the first multiplex, since the law has not been passed yet, but APEK wanted to fasten the process of digitisation with introduction of commercial channels as well. In October 2007, APEK announced that they have chosen Pop TV, Kanal A and TV3 (Ropret, 2007). These are also three largest commercial channels, which could help to promote the digitisation and increase the penetration of digital equipment.

In the autumn of 2007, a public tender for second multiplex was announced (Agency, 2009). APEK believed that the operators, who would invest in the establishment of the second national DTT network, would be more capable of finding appealing content choice that would pay off their effort<sup>1</sup>. In December 2008, the tender was finished with Norwegian company Norkring announced as the operator of this multiplex. The second multiplex MPN-B will include seven additional channels. The third multiplex MPN-C will include channels and new service providers. The majority of Slovenian population would be covered in two multiplexes, while third or fourth multiplex would mostly cover bigger and urban centres (Agency, 2006: 23).

### **The Adoption of Regulation – Consensus and Conflict Paradigm**

The authors of The Strategy acknowledged the importance of wide consensus and Ministry of Economy that was in charge of preparation of The Strategy and later also the Draft Law on Digital Broadcasting, indeed invited a wide range of institutions and players to co-operate on the preparation of these documents. However many reactions and proposals were ignored and refused, among them also the reaction of RTV Slovenia whose suggestions were “completely ignored”.

It is therefore difficult to declare that such consensus was really reached. During the preparation of The Strategy, other members of the project group at their meetings also expressed a number of critical concerns. Sandra Bašič-Hrvatín, former president of Broadcasting Council, stated that the transition of the existent situation of “the analogue world” (number and types of programmes) to digital broadcast technique wouldn't be the right solution and that – for the transition to be a success – “we need to encourage the emergence of new programmes and services” (Forum, 2006). Commercial broadcasters at the meetings of project group showed

no enthusiasm for digitisation. Tomislav Kalan, technical director of Pro Plus (which broadcasts channels POP TV and Kanal A), said that the viewers have not put any pressure on them regarding their transition to digital broadcasting, because they believe that they would not gain much (Forum, 2006).

The Strategy altogether envisaged 8 television multiplexes for Slovenia, which would provide at least 32 different channels. The Strategy was the basis for the *Digital Broadcasting Act* that came into force at the end of 2007. However there were no official assessments on how much finances the Slovenian broadcasters would have to spend for reconstructing their infrastructure in order to switch from analogue to digital. APEK estimates that the price for the national DTT network and multiplex services will be around € 300,000 per television channel annually, “which is an expense that an average Slovenian television broadcaster can hardly afford to pay in the transition period” (APEK, 2009).

According to APEK research, the process could be particularly harmful for the small broadcasters in parts of the country where no alternative platforms are available. Local and regional television channels that are recognized by the *Ministry for Culture* as programmes of special significance were exempted from payment of transmission costs in the analogue terrestrial scheme, however, but no payment relief is foreseen in the DTT model. Recent events show that even the biggest Slovenian television broadcasters are hardly capable of handling double transmission costs during the transitional period. This puts the planned establishment of the second national multiplex under a question mark.

The Law and The Strategy have both provoked a number of questions and criticism. There is a question why a special law was actually needed and why was digital broadcasting regulated outside of Mass Media Act (question was raised, among others, also by Bašić-Hrvatín, 2007). The then-minister of Economy Andrej Vizjak admitted that everything could have been regulated also in the Law on Electronic Communication, or Law on Media. “However, with specialized law we have done this in a more clear, transparent and simple way,” he claimed (Ropret, 2007). Even more important criticism of the Law is that it is set too technically, without taking into account that broadcasting is important cultural issue and that programmes, new services and content in general should be taken care of very delicately, not just technically and economically (see Kučič, 2007; Bašić-Hrvatín, 2007).

This technical and economical approach is confirmed by the fact that the Law was prepared by the Ministry of Economy, and not by Ministry of Culture, as was the case with the Law on Media, and Law on RTV Slovenia. However, unlike in many European countries, there was no turf war going on between Ministry of Culture as main broadcasting regulatory body, and Ministry of Economy, as main telecommunications regulatory body. Even more, Ministry of Culture didn't have any representative at the public debates of project group, appointed for preparation of The Strategy, and has not participated with questions or suggestions for The Strategy or the Draft Law.

As if to confirm this technical approach, public broadcaster RTV Slovenia was represented at those debates only by technical and multimedia staff, while managers of public television and radio, although they are key personnel in charge of the

programmes and content, missed to attend any of the debates. Two key people for preparation of The Strategy, both from Ministry of Economy<sup>2</sup>, have even gone so far to state that questions regarding programmes and content do not belong into strategy of digital switchover.

This shows an important misunderstanding of the scope of changes that will happen due to digitisation, even by the key people in charge of key government documents and regulation. Namely, this sort of technical reductionism completely ignores the way distribution and definitions in the regulation (which are often very vague; “innovative services”, for example, as defined in the Digital Broadcasting Act) influence the content that will – or won’t – be available to the population. It also influences the conditions under which it will be available. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe warned there is no guarantee about the quality and independence of broadcasting, offered by digitisation, or that it would be free-to-air, universally accessible and constant over time (Parliamentary, 2004). Therefore, important aspects of regulation regarding content and access (especially of their universality) should be incorporated in the regulation of digital broadcasting. The technical reductionism that is evident in the Slovenian case ignores such content and access aspects.

### **Public Broadcaster RTV Slovenia as Key Broadcaster**

RTV Slovenia was in the years before the adoption of Digital Broadcasting Act basically the only institution to warn that the state has not formed any decision regarding digitisation of transmitters and has not become involved enough in the processes of European Union. The awareness of the problems of digitisation and new content that should be offered when digitisation takes place was present already in the *Strategy on RTV Slovenia 2004–2010* from 2004. This document stated that public broadcaster *RTV Slovenia* should provide additional specialized digital television and radio channels of informative, parliamentary, educational, sports and archival character.

However, very little was said about digital technologies in the new Law on RTV Slovenia 2005 (ZRTVS), which was adopted a year after the *Strategy on RTV Slovenia 2004–2010* was adopted. The Law on RTVS only mentions digitisation and does not deal with the speciality of digital transmission. However the problems are not just external but also internal. Editor-in-chief of MMC, Zvezdan Martič, also warned that the level of expertise for digitisation within RTV SLO is “very low” and that there are “not enough experts”. He is also cautious whether current internal organization facilitates or cumpers introduction of digital broadcasting, since he believes that there is “no other interaction”, apart from that between MMC and Department of Transmissions. “For example, Radio Slovenia has only after a year and a half found out that we are already producing podcasts.” According to him, the interaction amounts to “level zero”. The information that the youngest engineer in the Technical Department is 40 years old is according to editor-in-chief of MMC very telling.

There is also a problem with introduction of digital broadcasting and programming, since RTV SLO hasn’t prepared any strategy or any plan for this. The *Strat-*

*egy on RTV Slovenia 2004–2010* did not discuss since it was prepared in 2003 (it rather focused on organisational, financial etc. issues). Questions about what would RTV SLO actually broadcast on its multiplex or digital channels were posed already earlier: “(t)he question remains, what would they broadcast since they didn’t prepare any programmes that would bring ‘programme added value’ to digital world (for example: video at demand, programme guides, interactive television ... )” (Kučič, 2007).

There is a problem with interesting content already on the existing channels of public broadcaster, or, as Jože Možina, Program Manager of TV Slovenia, admits: “The percentage of commercial and foreign programme viewers is rising. There might be lack of interesting content in RTV offer of programmes for the viewers.” Digital channels should improve this, as the Director General Anton Guzej claimed that “as a public television we will have high quality offer in all programming areas including popular ones. On eight television channels we will offer general, specific, web, interactive, mobile and other new digital services.” However, according to editor-in-chief of MMC Zvezdan Martič there is no specific strategy or plan what to do with new opportunities that digitisation brings. RTV SLO could “re-use some of its content, particularly archive. It should establish 24-hour news channel. However there is no document or paper about it.” (This could be a 24-hour news channel like CNN, while the parliamentary channel would be similar to C-SPAN.)

At the moment, the only positive consequences of digitisation for RTV SLO regarding channels is the fact that digital transmission of network enables to transmit the third, so-called parliamentary television channel that RTV SLO was obliged to broadcast already since 2005, however it lacked adequate analogue frequencies to do so. This channel finally started to broadcast in 2008 and also contains news programme, current affairs and documentaries.

According to Director General, Anton Guzej, “best possible way to assure development of RTV SLO in multimedia environment is to keep step with general trend of passage from ‘mass society’ to ‘fragmental society’ in which people expect more personal service and products, adapted to their needs. We have to satisfy demand of the audience for programmes and other services, anywhere and any time.”

## Conclusion

The case of Slovenian digital broadcasting seems to confirm many problems of digital broadcasting in general. Although there was an important reason for the introduction of digitisation, namely lack of analogue frequencies, this was mainly due to the fact that there was no relevant national strategy on the development of broadcasting in general in the past. This has led to the proliferation of radio and television channels, however without adequate criteria for the allocation of these frequencies and channels. Therefore Slovenian society was faced with an increase of broadcasting channels, however without the adequate increase of content plurality and diversity of these channels.

The adoption of relevant regulation and the introduction of digital broadcasting were seen from the beginning for many key players, including government minis-

tries, as mainly or only technical question, as if the introduction of digital broadcasting was indeed a question of technological determinism. This has again put the question of content production and content quality in the background, although the content diversity and not the technical question of the number of channels per se, should be the key question of digitisation and media policy in general.

As a consequence, the question of the new media content that would be offered after the introduction of digital broadcasting was not answered. No plans for new content that would fill the newly added channels, whether commercial or public ones, were prepared. No financial plans regarding the costs of this content were prepared as well. There is only general awareness by public broadcaster RTV Slovenia that new digital broadcasting offers new economic models, including on-demand, and more individual approach, leading to better fulfilment of users' needs and demands. However recent production and offered content still show no implementation of these possibilities.

The introduction of digital broadcasting in Slovenia is therefore without answers to some of the key questions, including the rationale for its introduction in terms of better and more diverse content. As the number of available channels was ever since the 1990's not the problem in Slovenia, one of the key aspects and supposed advantages of digitisation seems to be without the needed appeal for Slovenian users, but for broadcasters as well. At the time of writing it seems that none of the key actors, namely the audience, the broadcasters and the policy-makers, knows what to do with the digitisation and digital broadcasting. The much-needed mousetrap that would persuade the audience to start converting to digital broadcasting has not been build, just like in most of the other countries of EU.

Therefore it seems that we can apply (out of all paradigms, mentioned at the beginning) only conflict paradigm in terms of the adoption of digital regulation; however without clear vision what to do with this regulation once it is adopted. The evolutionary paradigm, saying that technologies that best serve the adaptation needs of our society are adopted, is implemented by defenders of digitisation. However it lacks clear answer which needs of our society (and which parts of this society) are really served by the introduction of digital broadcasting. It certainly seems that the introduction of digital broadcasting is a result of a mixture of political and emotional factors, while the cognitive factors of economy, quality and efficiency are secondary to the before-mentioned factors. Therefore it seems valid to claim that digital television as one of new technologies is "enabling as well as defining and leaves opportunities of choice within certain limits", as we quoted Van Dijk at the beginning (1996: 43). However it seems that these limits, when we're talking about the digital broadcasting, remain really small and tight.

#### ENDNOTES:

<sup>1</sup> All data and comments from APEK derive from their website, dedicated to digital broadcasting, <http://dvb-t.appek.si>, and from the interview with their representative Kerševan-Smokvina, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Smiljan Mekičar and Matjaž Janša. The latter is the managing director of the Directorate for Electronic Communications at the Ministry of Economy.

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## Posljedice digitalnog emitiranja za sadržaj produkcije

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### SAŽETAK

Razvoj digitalnog emitiranja često se definira kao tehnološka nužnost, u smislu tehnološkog determinizma. Ipak, analitičar medija i tehnološkog razvoja bi trebao upotrijebiti velik broj paradigmi da definira odgovarajuće procese i promjene i da omogući dublji uvid u uzroke i posljedice uvođenja tako širokih promjena, koje utječu na čitava društva a ne samo na grupe ili pojedince. Digitalno emitiranje prvo postavlja problem definiranja razloga njegovog uvođenja. Postavlja se pitanje kako ono utječe na sadržaj produkcije i kvalitetu te koje prednosti ustvari nudi. Naš cilj je definirati prednosti i probleme digitalnog emitiranja i provjeriti načela digitalnog emitiranja kroz različite diskurse. Želja nam je definirati prednosti digitalnog emitiranja za njegove korisnike i za stvaratelje medijskog sadržaja, i u tu svrhu koristimo različite paradigme (konflikt, evolucijski itd.) zajedno s analizom slovenskih slučajeva (analiza ključnih dokumenata, i intervju o problemu s vodećim slovenskim akterima). Saznajemo da mnogi važni akteri, uključujući javnost i one koji emitiraju, nisu uvidjeli sve najvažnije prednosti kao uistinu važne prednosti. Analiza razvoja u Europskoj uniji, kao i u Sloveniji pokazuje da uvođenje digitalnog emitiranja dovodi do mnogih ekonomskih i produkcijskih problema, uključujući i adekvatno povećanje sadržaja, kvalitete i specijalizacije.

Ključne riječi: digitalizacija, stvaranje sadržaja, regulacija, specijalizacija medija