Socio–Economic Processes, User Generated Content, and Media Pluralism

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INTRODUCTION

Media pluralism that is associated with the presentation of different points of view and ideas in media content, consists of a recurrent issue of discussion because it is in close relation with the socio-economic, technological and political environment within which media operate. Major developments take place with the worldwide economic instability that exists but also with the advancement of new technologies and social media that enhance online communication. International organizations such as the European Union have recently created a monitoring tool about media pluralism for European member states to utilize. It is at members' states own discretion the extent to which they will enforce media pluralism that at times relates to socio-economic and technological processes within their boundaries. In other geographic frameworks, such as Latin America, political issues influence media diversity and limit the possibility of different voices to be heard.

This paper aims (a) to present media pluralism's components and (b) to describe the reciprocal role between media pluralism's dimensions and communication technologies, socio-economic and political processes that take place. These processes are based on the technological advancements of new media platforms such as online video platforms and streaming services as media types for online media content. In doing so, this chapter adds to the literature by illustrating the role of the abovementioned processes on media pluralism. Media pluralism is under continuous negotiation. Current real-world scenarios are discussed that

aim to illustrate the dimensions of media pluralism and are of value to professionals in the media.

Which is the case when information and communication technologies allow for new online content material to be uploaded and become viral? Does this safeguard democracy in media and ensure that all voices are heard? The cases that are presented in this chapter as far as media content is concerned, are mainly taken from electronic media, television and press. Alternative approaches are presented as recommendations in need to take place for media pluralism and how online communication and new technologies can guarantee such expression of multiple points of view. These are renegotiated issues that the agents involved with the production and distribution of media content, -policymakers, media managers, marketers, firms-, can contribute so that media pluralism prevails. The creation and distribution of media content that presents different points of view, -minorities, underrepresented groups-, is affected by the rapid development and substantial impact of technological and communication changes. The chapter argues that diversity in media content may be influenced in periods of economic recession that a country may face. In addition, political and social reasons may influence the advertising budgets spent that in turn have an effect on media pluralism.

The next sections briefly describe media pluralism's dimensions and the concept of concentration of media ownership in relation to the technological advancements, user generated content created online as alternative media content, socio-cultural and economic processes in order to provide the framework and current trends. The use of exam-

ples aims to illustrate the way advertising media planning may be also influenced due to limited diversity in media content. Presentation of cases from countries where socio-economic and political processes and technological advancements may influence the media content diversity allows for recommendations to take place with the provision of alternative ways that enforce media pluralism. Recommendations to agents involved in the implementation of media pluralism are provided and suggestions for further research are given.

The researcher searched well-known databases which were Science Direct, Scopus, Emerald, Eric, E-List for available literature and search engines such as Google Scholar and Science Direct. The specific keywords under examination were the ones which were associated with media pluralism, media diversity, social media, user generated content and pluralism in the current socio economic processes.

BACKGROUND OVERVIEW: MEDIA PLURALISM

The definition of the concepts involved in the creation of the argumentation of this chapter entails media pluralism that consists of the umbrella that embraces aspects of media diversity. Media pluralism refers to more than one, in fact, numerous points of view and a variety in media content so that many people and groups can be represented (Valcke, Sukosd, & Picard, 2015).

Media pluralism is associated with and influenced by the presence of a wide framework of ownership and merger control requirements, a range of content in programming via different media types and genres, the existence of a variety of sources that contribute to the media content, viewpoint diversity and freedom of expression, independence of public service broadcasting in the content and program services provided, representation of local and regional interests, cultural expressions, limited or non-existence of clientelism relations

between media and political actors (K.U. Leuven et al., 2009a). The abovementioned dimensions when followed and implemented by agents, aim to provide access to information sources to all people. Pluralism though, continues to be the object of political contestation because it is influenced by the environment within which it operates, where continuous processes take place and the countries' specificities need to be taken into consideration from time to time (Leandros, 2010; Brogi & Dobreva, 2014). Towards this end, media pluralism needs to be holistically approached.

Valcke et al. (2015) categorize media pluralism as 'external' and 'internal' where the former has to do with the multiplicity of media outlets, the existence of many media owners so that media concentration does not take place and multiplicity in the operation of media in regard to the way expression of opinions and different points of view takes place; the latter, 'internal' pluralism is associated with the activities implemented by a broadcaster or a publisher to make every possible effort to produce a variety of and different media content material.

Within the European Union, a study was commissioned titled Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM) to develop a monitoring tool for providing member states with the possibility of assessing media pluralism and justifying whether or not pluralism exists in countries according to specific dimensions: media ownership, cultural, political and geographic diversity, regulatory framework, media types and genres (K.U. Leuven et al., 2009a). In 2013, the European Parliament awarded another grant to continue the implementation of MPM so that member states can be included (Brogi & Dobreva, 2014). At the time of writing this chapter, an ongoing research takes place on MPM. Although measures and a regulatory framework exists, each member state may act independently on the enforcement of specific legislation for plurality at national level. Thus, advocates of plurality and diversity argue that there is freedom of will that may safeguard media pluralism. Habermas

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