

PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY



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Public Service Media (PSM) across Europe and beyond are increasingly under pressure, with both their role in a digital environment and their funding widely scrutinised. As a result, PSM organisations are constantly in a defensive position. Following attempts to demonstrate their “public value”, discussion is now turning towards PSM’s “contribution to society”, a concept pushed by the European Broadcasting Union. Yet, to be meaningful for society and to influence PSM organisations, the concept must be more than just an instrument of legitimacy management. While communicating the valuable contributions of PSM is important, the concept is useless if limited to the question of how to better sell the contribution of PSM to citizens instead of guaranteeing that PSM actually serves the public interest and makes a contribution worth funding and discussing.

This volume critically engages with the analytical value and usefulness of the contribution to society concept, related both to the EBU’s conceptualisation and to the larger, normative question of contribution. Such critical analyses are not only a worthwhile task for communication and media scholars, but also for practitioners and policy-makers involved in debates about PSM’s future. The first section of this volume defines and refines how PSM can serve the public interest by meeting the communication needs of society in unique ways that commercial media cannot. The second section discusses what PSM can be beyond broadcasting, touching upon personalised on-demand services, new forms of mobile distribution, and public service bots. The third section focuses on organisational change and innovation, ranging from citizen participation to transparency.



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