

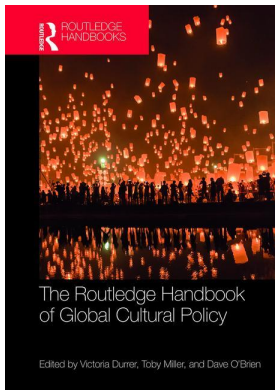
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The challenges of the new media scene for public policies¹

George Yúdice

Introduction

The new ICT – especially social networks and new ways of distributing entertainment by mega-corporations – are radically transforming the media landscape around the world. On the one hand, it is a scenario in which promises are made to deliver totally diverse content, including those created by users, to satisfy any preference, and, on the other hand, to provide increasing digital access to the entire population of the world. Those who make that promise are not governments but the new Internet mega-platforms like Google and Facebook. Latin American governments are ill prepared both legally and in their ability to provide support to domestic enterprises, which in turn contribute to tax revenues. At the same time, the question arises as to who should provide a seemingly public service, such as the Internet, which is the equivalent of electricity, telephony and water in the 20th century: the public sector (government) or the private sector (corporations)? Or are there other alternatives? What effect does this all have on users? How are public policies designed for this new scenario?

These children inhabit the virtual. The cognitive sciences have shown us that using the Internet, reading or writing messages (with one's thumb), or consulting Wikipedia or Facebook does not stimulate the same neurons or the same cortical zones as does the use of a book, a chalkboard, or a notebook. They can manipulate several forms of information at the same time, yet they neither understand it, nor integrate it, nor synthesize it as do we, their ancestors.

They no longer have the same head. With their cell phone, they have access to all people; with GPS, to all places; with the Internet, to all knowledge. They inhabit a topological space of neighborhoods, whereas we lived in a metric space, coordinated by distances. They no longer inhabit the same space.

(Serres 2013: 6–7)

In his defense of the youth culture, developed in the heat of the new media, Michel Serres argues that another way of thinking (“they do not have the same head”) has emerged, more connected to digital technology and the new practices this technology makes possible. These

would be the digital natives, but there are also older, well-assimilated digital migrants. One has to recognize that Serres is talking about French youth, who live in a rich country with good connectivity. That is why they have a high number – more than 85 percent – who access the Internet, especially through mobile telephony (Freier 2015; Global Internet Report 2015).

One might think that due to the marked inequality in “emerging” or “developing” countries, the new habitus would be radically different. According to Internet World Stats for February 2, 2016, Internet has 3.3 billion users worldwide,² 1.3 billion more than 5 years ago. This is more or less 45 percent of the 7.4 billion inhabitants of the earth.³ Although access is growing rapidly, it is clear that there is much inequality between the richer (North America has 88 percent coverage) and poorer regions (Africa has 29 percent) (Kemp 2015; Pew Research Center 2015). Latin America is in the middle with 56 percent, but in this vast region there is also much inequality between and within countries.

Even so, the near future will see more access to the Internet, especially through mobile telephony. As researchers at the Pew Research Center found, young people in “emerging” or “developing” countries access the Internet much more than the older generations. The average age gap in the 32 countries studied is 15 percentage points, but in all the Latin American countries included in the study – Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru and Venezuela – the gap is 30 or more percentage points, a fact that is also explained by differences in levels of education, incomes and knowledge of English (Pew 2015). In Brazil, for example, 72 percent of 18 to 43 year olds access the Internet or have a smartphone, in contrast to 35 percent of those aged 35 or older. According to the research department of the Groupe Mobile Sociale Association, or GSMA Intelligence, there are currently 7.7 billion mobile connections in the world and 3.8 billion unique subscribers of mobile accounts.⁴

These data are also confirmed when we look at peak numbers of users achieved worldwide by Facebook and Whatsapp at the end of 2015: 1.59 billion and 1 billion respectively. These platforms are mostly accessed by mobile (Martí 2016), 90.6 percent according to Facebook statistics.⁵ In Latin America, Whatsapp has a subscribership of 93 percent and 84 percent of mobile Internet users in Brazil and Argentina respectively (Smith 2016). Of course, Facebook foresaw the rapid growth of Whatsapp when it paid \$19 billion USD for the application in 2014 although it had only generated revenues of \$20 million in 2013. Increasingly, these companies and others are expanding their functions, not only chat and links but also transmission of photos and live real-time videos between friends since December 2015 (Lavrusik 2016). These functions, delivered free of charge to users (or to be exact, in exchange for data collection), provide something like a simulacrum of public service, enabling these platforms to negotiate and compete with nation-states, as we shall see shortly.

The most popular uses of mobile Internet in “emerging” or “developing” countries are communication with family and friends, the use of social networks, and in second place, the search for information (Pew Research Center 2015). Access to media and entertainment via mobile telephony are growing rapidly (eMarketer 2016). Even live cultural events, such as concerts and theater, are accompanied by specialized applications such as Shazam, which recognizes any song and provides detailed information about the artist, the lyrics, when the next concert will take place in the vicinity of the user and online ticket sales (López 2015). Mobile applications not only deliver music, video, texts and user-created content but also provide a set of tools that enable users to access whatever they want (BuddeComm 2015). This choice gives advantages to mobile technologies and social networks. An analysis of media, cultural activities and cultural management in this new digital landscape cannot focus only on the habits and customs of users; the political economy of this scenario is even more important. Both users and enterprises/technologies co-construct this landscape.

This accelerated growth of social media is co-produced by large platforms that respond to users' interests. It is not the 20th century-style consumer society, explained and criticized by sociologists and political scientists from Veblen to Benjamin Barber, although consumerism remains very strong. The desire – some would say the need – to communicate and establish solidarity or ties of affection, as in Facebook, prompts the creation of new applications, which are monetized in different ways and not only oriented toward the consumption of goods. All kinds of causes and issues are enhanced by these forms of communication, including alternatives to hegemonic capitalism, such as the crowdfunding platforms Kickstarter and Catarse, which have pages on Facebook. Nevertheless, vast data streams are generated through these platforms, which are put to various uses and not only for the sale of products. Smart cities, the so-called Internet of Things, data on health and other social interests, as well as government or business espionage take advantage of this avalanche of information.

Thinkers like Michel Serres, cited above, and Jesús Martín-Barbero characterize this new scenario as a paradigmatic social change, in which a crisis ensues, a tremendous hubbub comprised by the chats and conversations of users. As Martín-Barbero writes: “The chats are not composed only of language but narrations, images, music, experiences communicated by people and very diverse cultures, saying things about life to each other’ (Rincón and Yúdice, 2016). This noise is an expression not only of the failure of state institutions and society, but also of the desire for other arrangements, as seen in the expressions of outrage (indignation) throughout the world. But this social media landscape is also the apogee of new enclosures comprised of private clouds where data are stored and processed. The complexity is found in the simultaneity of enthusiasm for communication that seems not to be managed or governed and the lack of understanding about how communication, which now involves all life (as in the Internet of Things), is managed, analyzed and used by huge corporations that increasingly challenge governments over this new way of managing what is public, although the concept of the public loses robustness in this age of the user.

Citizen, public, audience, spectator, reader, consumer... lose their vitality (but they do not disappear) as epistemic and practical concepts together with the institutions that have sustained these categories. Both public service (including education) and the media weaken confronted by communication and knowledge among all (Martín-Barbero).⁶ Information is no longer emitted from a center to an expanding circumference; users intervene in what is produced and emitted. This poses a challenge for cultural management, accustomed to researching and knowing audiences to whom culture is delivered. What does research into publics mean in an age of usership and producership?

On this issue, the transformation of the music industry is revealing. In streaming services, which show increasing growth as the purchase or download of phonograms wanes (IFPI 2015), it is use itself – registered in databases and processed by recommendation software – that guides the creation of repertoires for users. It is a form of curatorship, which today is one of the most valuable services, in which media provider and experience designer converge. These providers compete to create memorable sensations that ensue not from spectacle but from experience (Mulligan 2014). One could sum up the phenomenon by invoking the concept of affect, which is increasingly used to characterize value in the new era of access and use. New digital ventures, especially those associated with brands, seek to absorb the expression of affect to attract ever more users.

It is not by chance, therefore, that large telephone companies offer free streaming services (for a limited time) to attract users. For example, Deezer has partnered with the telephone companies Tim and Vivo, which offer Vivo Music. In an ad for this service, they express one of the major principles of the new media landscape: “The music you want, when and

wherever you may be.”⁷ And there is always the possibility to access YouTube for free music and video streaming. The combination of mobile telephony and streaming services makes it possible to transform cultural enjoyment by “freeing” the user not only from the place where he or she enjoys but also from the traditional platforms of television, which dictate what programs can be seen, in what order and at what time. Breaking out of this rigid framework explains in part the rapid growth of Netflix, the film and television streaming service. Called the Uber of TV (IDGNow 2015), Netflix, which recently achieved availability in 190 countries (Chacón Jiménez 2016), also produces its own series, such as *3 percent* in Brazil, using the information it collects on the habits and preferences of users. An example is the detection of when users get hooked to a series (Spangler 2015). In my travels throughout Latin America I have had a few Marxist friends, who are very critical of the political economy of the media, talk about being glued to the television or tablet watching 50 episodes of a show on a weekend.

While the television networks offer programs that not every viewer wants to see, and therefore need to develop strategies to keep the attention of these viewers throughout the night so as to achieve good ratings and therefore advertisers, the new streaming services and OTT (over-the-top content, or content transmitted without the intervention of an operator) offer what viewers want to see, when they want to and without advertising. That’s why Amazon Prime created Amazon Studios, to produce their own series using data from user preferences.⁸ For Amazon Prime, a well-varied offering based on preferences ensures that people will sign onto their service (Miller 2016).

In what follows, I raise these topics for debate: (1) changes in cultural enjoyment; (2) the biopolitics implied in these changes; (3) the political economy of the new media scenario.

Changes in cultural enjoyment

In the first place, we need to recognize that there has been a fundamental shift in attitude toward intellectual and cultural property. In the first moment of transition to the digital world, file sharing prevailed (a practice called piracy by the media industry in post-Napster times). Industry failed to convince users that file sharing is a crime. In a second moment, ad-supported streaming services appeared, as in various music and video services (e.g., YouTube and the first iterations of Last.fm, Spotify, Pandora and Deezer), thus converting sharing into a business. Even if a third moment – the transition to paid streaming subscriptions – never consolidates as a significant enterprise, streaming is nevertheless growing in number of users and profitability. What is interesting about these new services is that users are no longer interested in being collectors. As Martín-Barbero says, knowledge takes place among all and therefore should generate another attitude regarding property. In the new political economy of networks, there is much talk of the commons (Gutiérrez 2016). I will return to this topic, but here I would like to emphasize attitudes toward access and sharing, according to which it is not necessary to own anything. These attitudes intervene in practices of collecting culture: recordings, books, films.

There are several theories of collectionism, among them those where discernment, knowledge and expertise prevail, others where taste and passion excel and yet others that emphasize fetishism. For Benjamin, who wrote much about collectionism, passion and fetishism are fundamental qualities: it’s a matter of an intimate relationship with objects (1968: 67). In contrast to the Renaissance collector, who was public and staged his high status, the modern collector emerges in anonymity and the privacy of inner life. The modern collector struggles, additionally, with a contradiction inherent in modern art: on the one hand, the

fetishization of the object and on the other the refusal of commodification of the object in order to transform it into art. This makes art a mere object of contemplation. In this way, art is only a function of taste, which in turn masks the collector's lack of expertise and limited experience, which is invested in the objects of the collection. Ackbar Abbas points out that for Baudelaire, this lack of experience is tantamount to the inability to assimilate the experience of modernity, that is, the "inhospitable and blinding age of big-scale industrialism" (Benjamin 1973: 111, cit. 227).

Benjamin also contrasts the way in which the writer and the collector come to their experience. The latter removes the objects from circulation by inserting them into the frame where they "turn to stone" (1999: 305). Objects enter a closed loop. The Internet users are more like Benjamin's writer; in their practices, information opens up to rhizomatic connections, sharing and the establishment of the commons. Abbas stresses the writer's experience in Benjamin, referring to tactics of acquisition against grain, which include borrowing books and not returning them or systematically failing to read them or inheriting them. Even the most obvious way to acquire them – to buy them – has its tactics, which differ depending on whether books are bought in bookstores or catalogs or auctions. But "the 'most praiseworthy' method of acquiring books is 'writing them oneself'" (Abbas 1988: 230). In this analysis, Benjamin seems to anticipate the *modus operandi* of the Internet, where property parameters are questioned and other forms of acquiring and experimenting with production and symbolic exchange are practiced without becoming a proprietor. It could be said that the collector of the 19th and 20th centuries becomes a disseminatory user in the new media scene, although property laws and conventional profit strategies limit this trend.

To understand the transformation of collecting in our time, we would have to do the same as Benjamin did: insert collecting into the political economy of symbolic production, which has some features different from the 19th and 20th industrial mode of production and the mid-20th century mode of consumerism. In the new economy-of-information-experience-and-affect the content of the products – which are exchanges, services, communications, etc. – is intangible, which is what circulates and links subjectivities and bodies. This is to say that the affect previously invested in objects finds other circuits of cathexis; this intangible content becomes more valuable than physical things used to produce these exchanges, services and communications. It is not by chance that in the new digital age, we deal with texts, images, sounds, communications, that is, everything that can be recombined and not appropriated but supplemented and put into circulation again. The value given by users to these items is definitely a use value and at the same time a circulation value, but not necessarily an exchange value. In any case, at present we see a tension between the desire for the commons that many users assume to exist in their practices and the tendency of companies to monetize any action and turn it into property. The fuel for the production of value in the Internet economy is the very action of users, which in most cases they do not even realize they provide.⁹

The biopolitics of the new media scene

Benjamin's insights would support the idea that users of social networks manifest an agency, not only in directly political actions such as the movements of outrage around the world,⁹ but also in media consumption, as argued by Simone Pereira de Sá (2016), from another theoretical perspective, with respect to fans in social networks. Yet the very use of social networks has biopolitical repercussions. You only have to think about the mining of data generated by users. It is significant that in this biopolitics users want to use the platforms that profit from

the information that they hand over. They are not subjected or oppressed. This harvesting of value is not experienced as exploitation. The vast majority do not even read the terms of use and simply accept them in order to get access to the platforms on which they express themselves and connect to others. This imperative to express themselves predominates in social networks that are necessary for the experience-and-affect economy. At a time when less profit is generated by the sale or licensing of cultural products, new companies have developed technologies to facilitate the expression of affect, which is a means of business and also control. The affective turn in cultural studies in the new millennium tends not to have a critical view of the technologies that facilitate the generation of affect. The analysis of the data generated by recognition software in streaming services, of the preferences in the new curatorship of music and audiovisual texts and of new forms of co-creation, as in Jorge Drexler's *aplicaciones* (Jorge Drexler¹¹) are some examples of the use of affect. Biopolitics takes advantage of what we have understood to be the most profound materiality of human being: affect.

It could be said that affect is the intermediary solvent in which subjectivities, bodies and cybernetic machines are cathected. Affect theorists Patricia Clough et al. argue that in the current stage of capitalism, “the distinction between organic and non-organic matter is dissolving in relation to information,” with the result that matter itself emerges as informational (2007: 62). This reflection leads them to postulate that “science and capital are engaged in efforts to directly modulate the pre-individual or the potentiality of the indeterminate, the emergent creativity of affect-itself,” thus requiring critical thinkers to pay attention to the tension between control (the topic of Deleuze's (1992) frequently cited essay on control societies) and the indeterminate emergence or potency in the Spinozian terms of Hardt and Negri (2005). This tension “constitutes the problematic at the heart of a radical neoliberal governance of productivity” (Clough et al. 2007: 63).

The Internet of Things (IoT) or the Internet of Everything, this galactic network of interconnection and communication of things, processes and people through sensors and databases, is already becoming an everyday experience in the linking of culture, cities, transportation, health, agriculture, industry, housing, etc. in a “smart” environment. In the early stages of this network, one of the most cited affect theorists characterized ubiquitous computing as an immersive and interactive web suggestive of the IoT, which:

seamlessly and continuously relay digitally coded impulses into and out of the body through multiple, superposable sense connections, eventually developing into an encompassing network of infinitely reversible analog-digital circuiting on a planetary scale.

(Massumi 2002: 142)

In fact, Massumi was talking about the potentiality of affect. In relation to affect, the cultural and creative industries in the digital age play an important role in the changes that are taking place in society and economy because they are quite apt as the means to insert people in immersive environments. As we have seen in the case of streaming, people are increasingly connected to music and video, and this traffic of contents stimulates the extension of the so-called cloud, which is nothing more than centers where all data is stored and processed. According to a 2014 report, “2/3rds of digital universe content is consumed or created by consumers... video watching, social media usage, image sharing” (Meeker 2014: 65), thus playing a key role in the growth of IoT. According to estimates, the IoT will reach 50 billion connected objects and a value of \$14.4 trillion USD in just 4 years, which would today equal the second economy in the world, between the United States and China (Edwards 2015).

Data mining and analysis, which will increase exponentially with the IoT, has a beneficial side in terms of the administration of public services, support to business enterprises, health monitoring, empowerment of people with disabilities, etc. However, security, which is one of the chief uses of IoT, is a more complex issue. Everyone needs security, not only in terms of defense against crime or natural contingencies, but IoT facilitates the invasion of privacy. In a world saturated with “smart” appliances everything will be known, or already is known. With an arsenal of analytical tools, and using technologies developed in cognitive psychology and neuromarketing, not only are attention, perception, behavior, preferences and feelings measured, but so also is the unconscious. The objective of these measurements is to go beyond the thinking brain to understand what lies at the most material level of affect where “motivation begins... With a series of brain chemical triggers rooted in primal neural circuits that evolved to help humans make decisions” (Crowe 2013).

Given the enormity of the IoT, it is evident that only the richest states or the world’s largest platforms/companies can make the investments required to create and manage this new phenomenon. And this gives them the opportunity to harness information and the profit or the “intelligence” for surveillance that derives from that information. For example, it is for such a purpose that Google paid \$3.2 billion USD to acquire Nest Labs, a manufacturer of thermostats and high-tech smoke detectors. The thermostat regulates the ambient temperature in relation to users’ preferences; in this way, the device learns over time. These devices operate with algorithms that allow all of a user’s devices to communicate with each other, creating user profiles to anticipate their needs (Trefis Team 2014). Thus, Google increases the reach of the cloud where the data is stored and creates a system of rhizomatic communication among users, devices and the media.

Political economy of the new media scene

It is true that more than half of the world’s population is excluded from the web, although more and more are connecting through mobile phones. In relation to that gap, companies like Facebook and Google have strategies to connect to the disconnected. To achieve this, Facebook bought a fleet of drones that will continuously fly for months or years thanks to solar energy, emitting laser broadband signals in areas with low connectivity in Asia, Africa and Latin America (Wakefield 2014). Yael Maguire, engineering director of Facebook Connectivity Lab, designed an intermediate backbone between satellites and land terminals that will receive at all times signals from drones flying at 20 km altitude, above other aircraft and even the weather, but sufficiently close to the earth for signals to be strong, approximating the quality of optical fiber (Internet.org 2014).

Likewise, in 2013 Google began Project Loon, which will send helium balloons 20 kilometers high to transmit Internet signals to disconnected or poorly connected areas. Google also bought Titan Aerospace, a company that makes drones, for an undisclosed amount to complement the balloons of the Loon project. It also acquired Skybox Imaging for \$1 billion USD, a company that has its own satellite network and specializes in data mining and analysis and the production of detailed videos and images of the earth, extending Google Earth’s ability to capture images of the planet in real time, thus linking profiles and location (Inam 2014).

Of course, it is naive to think that Facebook and Google are providing a humanitarian public service that governments do not provide, although it is true that there will be more connectivity and that the poor may have cheaper access to such operations as digital bank transfers or receiving remittances via cell phone, among others. The Gates Foundation,

in partnership with the World Bank, has a project to integrate billions of people into the banking system by means of mobile telephony and digital money. Google does not need to profit directly from these transactions; people will use their platform with the endorsement of an intergovernmental public institution (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation 2015), and it's this added value that matters. To facilitate the use of its platform, Google has introduced a cheap smartphone in Africa where 95 percent of Internet access takes place via mobile telephony. The phone prioritizes two Google properties: the Android operating system and use of YouTube (owned by Google), specially tailored for offline use (Sengupta 2015). The development of cheap smartphones by other companies – Mozilla (\$33 USD), Huawei (\$80 USD), etc. – is facilitating an increase in the number of users and the triumph of the Android platform.¹⁰

These giant companies emerged in the new millennium to combine the packaging of web pages, e-mail, text messages, audiovisual texts and music file transferred via FTP, financial services, etc., which were offered separately on the Internet by the end of the 1990s (van der Velden and Kruk 2012–2013). This bundling takes place on these companies' own platforms, to which the metaphor of the cloud was applied, but which are rooted in a very costly and polluting materiality. As reported by Glanz (2012), global data centers “use about 30 billion watts of electricity, roughly equivalent to the output of 30 nuclear power plants...”, but video occupies more and more space on the web. According to Cisco Systems (2014) global IP video traffic will be 79 percent of all Internet consumer traffic by 2018, up from 66 percent in 2013. This does not include video exchanged via peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing. The sum of all forms of video (TV, video on demand [VOD], Internet and P2P) will be in the range of 80 to 90 percent of global consumer traffic by 2018. All of the six largest companies that build cloud infrastructure – Amazon, Microsoft, IBM, Google, Oracle, Rackspace – are American and provide services to other companies (Netflix and other streaming providers) and governments (e.g. the US Central Intelligence Agency) (Weinberger 2015).

In the next section I comment on Internet.org, Facebook's foundation, which seeks to establish agreements with governments to provide Internet access to those without connections. This attempt by Facebook is part of its political economy; by simulating a public service it intends to exponentially increase its market value. Precisely in terms of the increase in the number of users on their platforms, especially via mobile telephony, that Facebook, Google and other companies are valued in the market. On February 2, 2106, the newly created Alphabet, Google's parent company, overtook Apple as the most valued company in the world. Five of the nine most valued companies in the world are Alphabet (\$ 554.8 billion USD), Apple (\$ 529.3 billion USD), Microsoft (\$ 425 billion USD), Facebook (\$ 334 billion USD) and Amazon (\$ 264 billion USD). At the beginning of February, these five companies had a combined value of \$ 2.1 trillion (Krantz 2016), which is equivalent to India's GDP, the 7th largest economy in the world, overtaking the GDP of Italy, Brazil and Canada (Statistics Times 2016).

It is not surprising, therefore, as Benjamin Bratton (2014) writes, that platforms increasingly exercise transnational and global sovereignty, and some nations adapt to the form of the platform (e.g. the National Security Agency NSA, new Chinese initiatives such as the microblogging site Sina Weibo, etc.). The issue of sovereignty is crucial, since the big platforms run the Internet of Things, which, as we have seen, aims to manage everyday life through the connection of appliances and other devices, media, objects, cities and human behaviors.

The power and size of these companies make it easier for them to compete and negotiate with governments. The conflict between China and Google is well known. China

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aims to replace Western platforms (Gibbs 2014), which in turn – as in the case of Google – behave as if they were protecting a global sovereignty and not just their business. In turn, China refers to Chinese Internet sovereignty (Information Office 2010), although some analysts see such sovereignty claims as informational authoritarianism and censorship (Jiang 2010).

Latin America

Following the scandal of privacy violations revealed by Edward Snowden, the Brazilian government accelerated the process of consultation and design of the Civil Internet Framework that President Rousseff sanctioned in April 2014 (Estarque 2014). In anticipation of the new law, Google, which has collaborated with the NSA spying on communications from heads of state around the world (IBN Live 2013), moved its DNS service from Brazil to the USA, which permitted making visible use of its service on the Internet. Internet analyst Doug Madory (2013) argued that this move affected the service –delaying the time of data transmission – because, in its efforts to avoid the monitoring of its operations by the Brazilian government, operations were now carried out in the US.

Another example of the conflict and negotiation of platforms and states was seen at the Summit of the Americas in Panama in April 2015, when the presidents of Argentina, Brazil, Panama and Peru met with the Facebook Chief Executive, Mark Zuckerberg, who sought to establish agreements for its foundation Internet.org with those countries, adding them to the agreements it had already brokered with Colombia, Guatemala and Paraguay, the latter where the beta version of Facebook Livre was tested. The debate in Brazil is an example of the complexity and danger of the promise of free Internet for the poor, at least according to the Internet.org model. Zuckerberg and President Rousseff signed an agreement that would appear to be in conflict with the Civil Internet Framework. One of the problems is that Facebook Livre provides only a subset of Internet services for the poorest, thus creating unequal access. Another problem is that the practice of Zero Rating seems to violate the principle of net neutrality since “operators... and some technology companies... allow free access, or do not charge for mobile data traffic for some online services, such as social networking apps and messages” (Ribeiro 2015).

Carolina Botero, executive director of the Karisma Foundation in Colombia, and one of the most important activists on equal access to the media and Internet, criticized Internet.org and the governments that support it:

We have serious concerns that Internet.org is presented as a public policy strategy for universal access to the Internet. This initiative compromises everyone's rights and blurs the government's obligation to reduce the digital divide for its citizens for compromised access to certain applications. No matter how interesting they are, these services are associated with the commercial interest of a multinational which the state is directly supporting.

(Cited in Bogado and Rodríguez 2015)

By the end of 2015, this apparent contradiction, which is in violation of the principle of neutrality that is underpinned by the Civil Internet Framework, had not yet been resolved. In the process of recommending to the president for the preparation of the Draft of the Presidential Decree that will regulate the Civil Code, the Task Force on Internet Management was able to “reach an agreement, without mentioning zero-rating” (Aquino 2015).

Conclusion

What has all this – globalized platforms, sovereignty, Internet of Things, etc. – to do with cultural management? In my view, a lot. Public policies – including the lack of policies, which is a policy in itself – have a double effect: on the one hand, they can facilitate or hinder new undertakings and practices, not only for making culture but also circulating and sharing it; on the other hand, they contribute to or regulate biopolitical intervention and the growth of huge Internet platforms, which in turn exercise sovereignty.

Latin America is a very coveted region for many reasons (Télez 2015). It is the region where users spend more time connected to the Internet (Mander 2015). According to the Internet analytics company Com.Score, five of the ten most active countries in social network use are in Latin America: Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Mexico and Chile. Latin America as a region has almost double the world average of user connection hours in social networks; and Brazil stands out with 240 percent above the world average (ComScore 2013: 21). But as in the rest of the world, American platforms such as Facebook, Google, YouTube and Twitter (Vaughn–Nichols 2013) dominate, and they want not only to maintain their dominance but to increase it. Facebook is the leading publisher in the two largest media markets, Mexico and Brazil (ComScore 2013: 49). And Google/YouTube is the largest video provider in the region (52).

This information is crucial for Latin America, especially if we think about how to access the media. As for connections to Internet, Latin America is the third region in the world after North America and Europe, with 10.2 percent of global connections for a world population share of 8.6 percent.¹¹ In terms of the online market, Latin America is the second fastest growing market in the world, after China, and much of this growth is due to mobile telephony (eMarketer 2015b). As for mobile accounts, in 2014 penetration was 65.2 percent, with 395.5 million unique accounts. Mobile Internet access accounts will grow from 55.4 percent in 2015 to 72.6 percent in 2019 (Statista 2016). As for smartphones, in 2012 there was a penetration of 20 percent, estimated at about 48 percent in 2017, a number that will grow rapidly in 2020, when it is estimated there will be 245.7 million smartphones or a penetration of 57 percent (eMarketer 2015a). To be sure, mobile Internet connections outnumber fixed-line connections throughout the region (GSMA 2014: 16). These data require incorporating the use of mobile phones into any inquiry into the enjoyment of music, video and text, but also the consequences in terms of the uses to which the information collected from users is put.

Culture is transversal, necessarily intertwined with technology, media, enterprise, politics, etc. It is also globalized. The United States and its allies in cognitive-experience-and-affect capitalism seek to establish and strengthen world trade laws through the intergovernmental institutions they dominate (WTO, WIPO, etc.). Latin America is a very unequal region in cultural commerce: according to PriceWaterhouseCoopers (2012), the media and entertainment market for 2015 was estimated at 6 percent of the world market. But that does not mean that Latin American ventures exported this percentage. That's the size of what dominant companies can take advantage of. The export market would be more similar to the percentage of Latin American companies included in the Forbes list of the world's largest companies, which is more or less 3 percent (Wright and Pasquali 2015). Of course, the most important criteria to be taken into consideration in assessing Latin America's market share, from a cultural viewpoint, are the cultural offerings, in the broadest sense of what might be meant by culture, and this has not been measured in these reports on cultural industries or media and entertainment. But even when the measure shows that the market is larger, the arguments I offer in this essay suggest that the platforms on which the cultural sector is developed are

very important, and these platforms have the ability to monitor and guide development, as in the example given above of telephone operators that offer streaming services. In addition to thinking about small local markets in the region, which is fundamental, one must think about the regional macro-market, since the dominant companies aim to capture it precisely in these terms, as a region.

This is why although national policies are necessary (e.g. the Civilian Internet Framework) they are not sufficiently effective; regional agreements are needed with other countries seeking to level the playing field. In this sense, I comment very briefly on a promising initiative, but it should include a serious and actionable reflection on the new media scene, both in terms of its effects on culture and its techno-economic policy, which are two sides of the same coin.

I refer to MICSUR, the South American Cultural Industries Market, whose first edition was held in Mar del Plata, Argentina, in May 2014 and second in Bogotá, Colombia, in October 2016. Its importance has to do with the regional alliance necessary to address inequalities in Latin American cultural trade. As we already know, the sources and strategies of public financing for cultural enterprises are quite weak in all Latin American countries. The creation of a general market aims to increase imports from neighboring countries, thus generating income that remains in the region and does not migrate to the United States or Europe. To do this, other ministries and undertakings from other sectors – telephone operators, the law, banking, engineering, etc. – should be included in addition to those that are mentioned (education and tourism) in cultural meetings. Moreover, these Latin American cultural summits should reflect on policies that support a commons, not just a cultural one but one in which diverse cultural practices and forms of circulation interact with other sectors. This goal requires a set of strategies debated and linked between governments, enterprises, the legal sector, civil society and social networks.

Notes

- 1 First appeared, in Portuguese, in *Revista Observatório*, 20 (2016): 87–112. <http://www.itaucultural.org.br/revista/91827/>
- 2 The number of users in real time can be found at: www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users/. 2/2/16.
- 3 The world population in real time can be found at: www.worldometers.info/world-population/. 2/2/16.
- 4 GSMA Intelligence statistics in real time can be found at: <https://gsmaintelligence.com/>. 2/4/16, 20:17 -6 time zone.
- 5 <http://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/>. 1/28/16.
- 6 The reference to what is “known among all” requires at least mention of various adaptations of the concept of General Intellect proposed by Marx in the *Grundrisse*. There he suggests that starting with a particular point of capital development the real generation of wealth will depend not only on labor time but also on scientific expertise and organization. The main factor of production will be the general productive forces of the social brain (Marx 1973). Marx anticipates information theory and the knowledge economy, or cognitive capitalism, which for some heralds the potential for neo-communist transformation of the world by the constituent power of the multitude (Virno, Hardt and Negri) and for others constitutes the necessary development for salvaging the neoliberal world order, which foments greater inequality, for example, information systems that make possible outsourcing and transnational subcontracting that lead to greater precarity (Dean 2005; Žižek 2009).
- 7 Vivo Música, www.vivo.com.br/VivoMusica. 7/21/15.
- 8 In Hollywood, there are several companies specializing in sentiment analysis for the purpose of fine tuning screenplays and audiovisual soundtracks (Barnes 2013).

- 9 There is an interesting debate about the concept of value in relation to the actions of users in this new digital scene. On the one hand, there are those like Christian Fuchs (2013: 11) for whom the prosumer [a neologism resulting from the combination of producer + consumer or professional + consumer] creates value that is voluntarily yielded in use. Assuming a more orthodox Marxist position, Rabosto (2014: 40) argues that what is productive is exclusively labor that “is objectified as a use value for consumption by others, in platforms, networks, contents, etc.” That other labor “which transforms data and information into advertising profiles to facilitate the transformation of goods into money” is unproductive. Those who produce the data are not the users but the engineers who design the software that enables the transformation of use of networks and data (2. 3).
- 10 In early February 2016, Mozilla’s board of directors declared that the company would no longer offer a good mobile experience, which suggests that it failed in its attempt to compete with Google’s (Android’s) dominance in the mobile market (Heilman 2016).
- 11 Statistics taken from: www.internetlivestats.com/internetusers/, for the number of users in real time, and www.worldometers.info/world-population/#region for the population of Latin America in January 2016.

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