Public service media and platformization: conceptualizing challenges

7th July 2023

PSM research

www.psm-ap.com
FWO-Chanse
(coordinated by Prof. dr. Catherine Johnson)

Streaming services

Recommender systems

Platform policies

VUB strategic research programme in media economics (2022-2026)

Evolutions in PSB conceptualization

Public Service Broadcasting

Public Service Media

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Evolutions in PSB conceptualization

Public Service Broadcasting

Public Service Media

Public Service Platforms

Evolutions in PSB conceptualization

Public Service Broadcasting

Public Service Media

Public Service Platforms

Core challenges mostly related to technological advancements
Strong adherence to existing PSM organizations
Legitimation arguments defined based on competition with other players
Core values remained the same
A fundamental need for change

Evolutions in platform conceptualization

➤ Discussions on streaming services as platforms, online tv, portals, etc. (e.g. Johnson, 2019)

➤ Platforms as services around which markets are built (e.g. Poell, Van Dijk, etc.)

➤ Conceptualizations of media platforms (service and infrastructure based) (e.g. Evens and Donders, 2019)

➤ PSM as a platform or PSM amidst Processes of platformisation
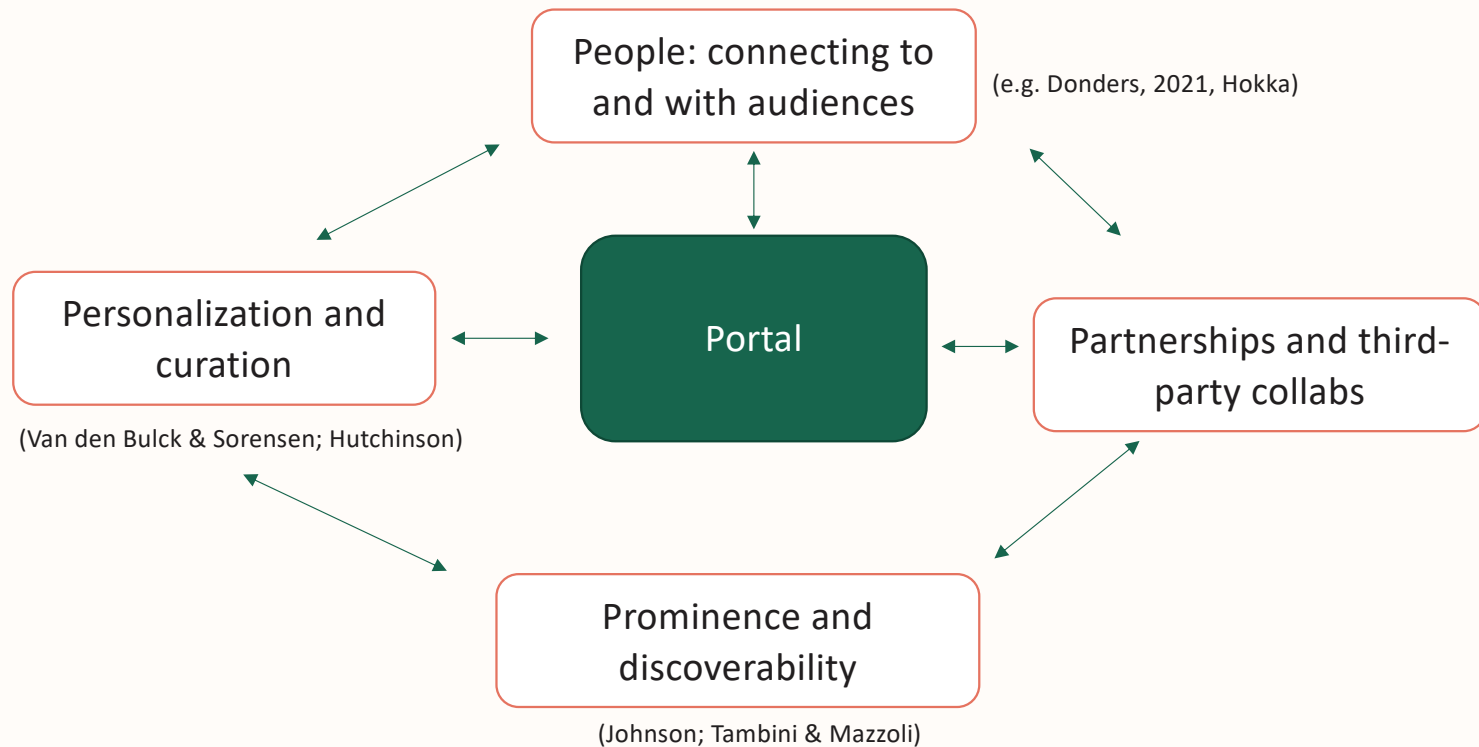
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"Platformisation is defined as the penetration of infrastructures, economic processes and governmental frameworks of digital platforms in different economic sectors and spheres of life, as well as the reorganisation of cultural practices and imaginations around these platforms." (Poell, 2019)
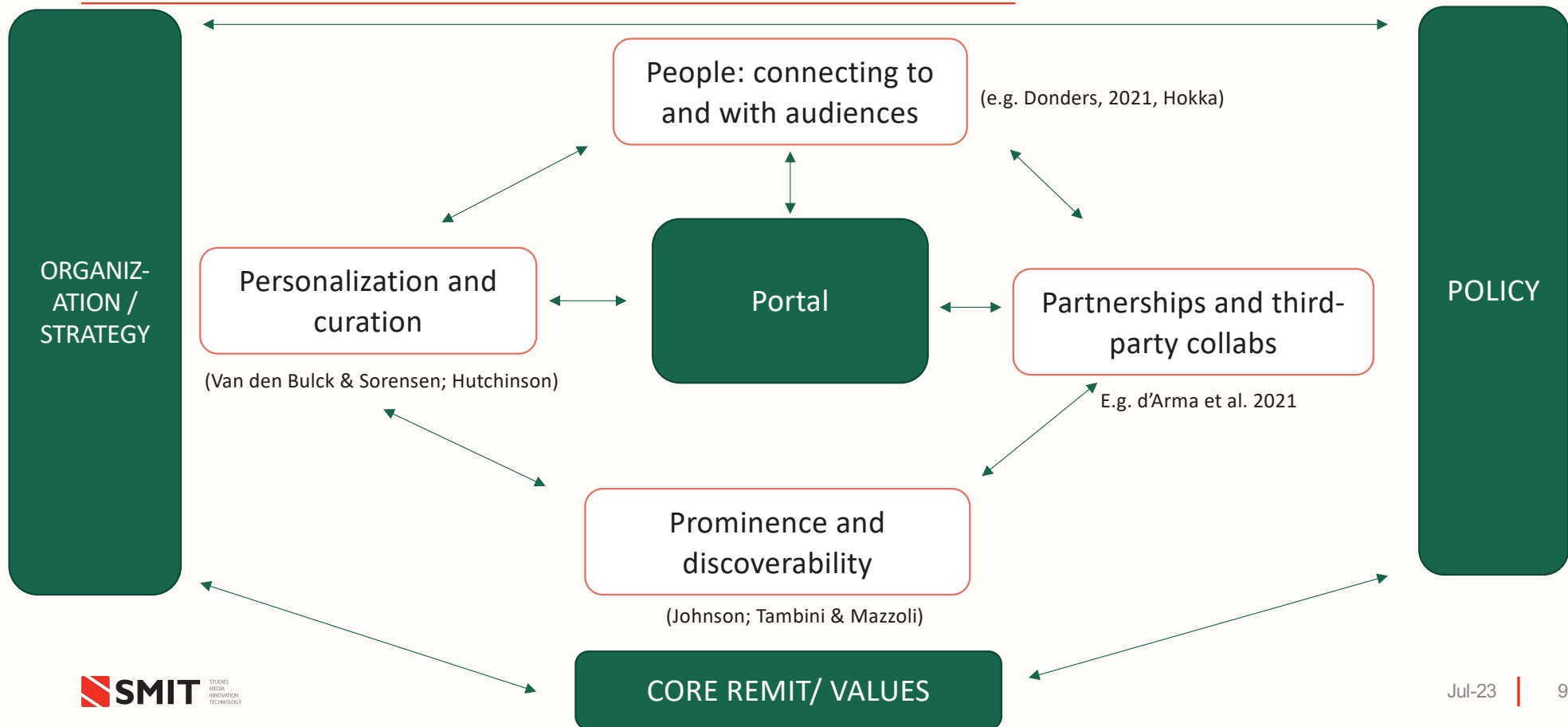
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Platformization and PSM

A framework for analysis *(Iordache, Raats, Johnson et al. forthcoming)*

People: connecting to and with audiences

(e.g. Donders, 2021, Hokka)

Personalization and curation

(Van den Bulck & Sorensen; Hutchinson)

Portal

Partnerships and third-party collabs

Prominence and discoverability

(Johnson; Tambini & Mazzoli)

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ORGANIZ-ATION / STRATEGY

People: connecting to and with audiences

(e.g. Donders, 2021, Hokka)

Personalization and curation

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Partnerships and third-party collabs

E.g. d'Arma et al. 2021

Prominence and discoverability

(Johnson; Tambini & Mazzoli)

CORE REMIT/ VALUES

POLICY

Current work conducted within Chanse WP1

90 documents

Dimension	PSM organisation Annual report	Management contract	Regulator (review, recommendations)	Legislation (Media decree/Act)	Policy statement
Audience	How do they measure online audience reach? How do they target specific groups?	What audiences are evidenced? Is young equated with online? What about disabled?	How are audience requirements linked to PSM mission (access, universality etc.) & strategic objectives (digitalization, innovation etc.)? What core concepts are used?		
Multiplatform requirements	What are the multi-platform/ cross-platform priorities? What is the editorial strategy for VOD?	What are the multi-platform/ cross-platform requirements & priorities? Are there limits on what PSM are allowed to do?		Are there legal requirements for the PSM portal and/or multi-platform activities?	Is there a policy position regarding PSM going online? What are the priorities?
Algorithm, recsys, data processing	How is the algorithm used, implemented, developed? How is personal data managed/processed? What is the scope of personalisation?	How detailed are commitments to curation and personalisation?	What are the requirements for algorithms/data/ transparency? Are there concerns?	Are there legal requirements regarding algorithms, data protection (for PSM online), transparency etc.?	Is there a policy position regarding personalisation, datafication, or transparency debates?
Prominence	How is prominence measured/implemented? What measures for discoverability?	What requirements are there for prominence: content, service, brand etc.?	What requirements/ recommendations for prominence & discoverability?	Are there legal requirements for prominence?	Is there a policy position regarding prominence debates? Is this resulting in policy action?
Collaborations, third-party platforms	How are collaborations or the use of third-parties used in reaching KPIs?	What type of collaborations are prioritised?	Are collaborations limited/enabled?	Are there legal requirements for collabs?	What is the role of PSM in the media ecosystem? How do policymakers describe this role

PSM-AP (Chanse), *forthcoming, please do not cite*

Dimension	PSM organisation Annual report	Management contract	Regulator (review, recommendations)	Legislation (Media decree/Act)	Policy statement
Audience	Audience reach measured in number of registered users on VOD – by 2025 aim for 50% of Flemish population to have a VRT profile.	'Digital-first mentality' must also pay attention to access & 'digital participation'. 'Digital switch' of children & youth are priorities.	Importance of tracking active users rather than registered users to measure reach & impact. Enhance audience participation & interaction,/engagement.	Accessibility for persons with disabilities.	Priorities: diversity, accessibility, promotion of Flemish identity.
Multiplatform requirements	Aims for more on-screen representation. Cultural offerings and interactive projects prioritised. Digital offerings & formats used to reach all target audiences. Keeps brand identities on VOD.	Cross-platform strategy for reaching youth (social media). In-house production to also focus on innovative & digital formats for nonlinear.	VRT must strengthen its digital offer to reach everyone in the future. VRT Max developed into PSM central viewing destination. Brands to target their audiences with adapted offer, also online.		VRT must reach as many young people as possible through digital content and use of various platforms.
Algorithm, recsys, data processing	Taste-broadening algorithm used to reach PSM mission: 7 algorithm-based personalised lists. Combined with editorial curation. Transparency to be improved but avoid overloading w/ info.	- Uses public broadcasting algorithms, editorial curation & personalisation to broaden tastes and promote diversity. - AI to improve accessibility - Safe & transparent use of data.	Initial results of taste-broadening algorithm seen as positive. VRT migrating to 'event-based' measurement of impact in 2022. More transparency being implemented and tested.	VRT's public service mission also includes all activities that directly or indirectly contribute to its performance, including processing personal data necessary to fulfil its public service mission.	
Prominence	Flemish content prominently visible on VRT; also sets VRT apart from other streamers. Flemish culture & history given a prominent place in the offer.	Flemish and Dutch-language works to be prominent on VOD.	Flemish content prominently visible on VRT; also sets VRT apart from other streamers. Most popular programmes generally prominent on homepage, often Flemish.	30% European works of which a significant proportion consists of Dutch-language works.	Special attention must be paid to visibility & findability of Flemish broadcasters and productions on various platforms, to compete with international players.
Collaborations, third-party platforms	Collaborations for (digital) innovation & measurement, and events (e.g., educational). Well-considered use of social media (based on audience reach).	Collaborations in the field of innovation (research, start-ups, companies), content creation, & valorisation of Flemish content.	Collaborations in the field of innovation (research, start-ups, companies), & content creation (esp. documentaries) positively evaluated.		VRT to support media ecosystem, & play a pioneering role by developing a cross-media measurement system together with private media players.

Preliminary lessons learned

➤ Differences in foci between legal texts, regulatory documents, and PSM strategies

➤ Ambitious plans for digital, none question the need for PSM to be highly active online

➤ VOD portals pivotal, yet differences between VOD as an extra service versus the digital-first or even digital-only shifts

➤ Techno-optimism about the use of VOD to meet un(der)served audiences and the use of recsys/portals to meet very specific audience NEEDS (not only demands), yet very vaguely defined

➤ A lot of strategy emulates platform tactics, but insufficiently explored whether needed 'exclusives', 'taste-broadening', catalogues

➤ Current debates highlight challenges of PSM to reach young audiences online mostly, but very little attention for young audiences' specific age groups

➤ All realize true universality requires some form of target group strategies, but most still prioritize largest possible audience

➤ Linear still focus of most policy documents

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THANK YOU

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