



**Edited by Ranjana Das and Brita Ytre-Arne**  
With contributions from the CEDAR network

# **Audiences, towards 2030**

Priorities for audience analysis

*(This page is intentionally left blank)*

*(This page is intentionally left blank)*

This report has been produced by the CEDAR network which was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, to run between 2015-2018.

Design by: Bojana Romic

Photographs: Colourbox.com

To quote this report:

**Das, R. & Ytre-Arne, B. Eds. (2017). Audiences, towards 2030: Priorities for audience analysis. Surrey: CEDAR.**

ISBN: 978-1-5272-0543-7

September 2017

An electronic version of this report can be downloaded from [www.cedarahrc.com](http://www.cedarahrc.com).



# Acknowledging the dilemmas of intrusive media

*David Mathieu, Juliane Finger, Patricia Dias, Despina Chronaki, Cosimo Marco Scarcelli*

Part of the stakeholder consultation addressed strategies that media audiences are developing to cope with pressures and intrusions in a changing media environment, characterised by digitalisation and interactive possibilities. We interviewed ten stakeholders representing interests such as content production, media literacy, media regulation, and activism. Consulting with these stakeholders left the impression that **pressures and intrusions from media lack widespread acknowledgement**, and that little is known about audiences' strategies to cope with media. Even when intrusions are acknowledged, we find no consensual motivation, nor any clear avenue for action. Therefore, we have analysed different discursive positions that prevent acknowledging or taking action upon the pressures and intrusions that we presented to these stakeholders. The discursive positions are outlined below.

## Dilemmas of intrusion: Discursive positions

**Never heard of it!** This position results from stakeholders who engage strategically with audiences and develop measurements concerning audience responses to content delivered that indicate the position of the organisation on the market of audience attention. In brief, media pressures and intrusions are simply not being perceived by measurements developed to assess the audience as consumers of media content.

**How could that be!** Not only are pressures and intrusions not in focus as in the previous position, but they come as an element of surprise in a media environment seen to provide opportunities for audiences, and characterised by competitiveness and fragmentation. Audiences as consumers are said to be driving the production of media content, and their changing habits are difficult to track and keep up with. It is as if these stakeholders have to adapt to the audience, rather than vice-versa.

**They are the problem!** In this position, not only are audiences occupying the front stage of the media scene, but their actions are seen as a major source of intrusions and



pressures. Threats to privacy, trolling, bigotry, etc. are seen as results of intrusions created by audiences. Moreover, changing norms in media use, in self-presentation and identity formation are the outcome of peer pressure, that is, of the constant and demanding presence of an audience always alert via digital and mobile media.

**How can we handle it!** In this position, the pressures and intrusions are recognized, but the rapid changes in audience habits and the complexity and transnational character of the media landscape make it difficult to intervene, in spite of the willingness of stakeholders who do create awareness and encourage coping strategies.

**We can't help!** While the problems are recognized, the media environment as a whole is seen as responsible. The problem is in the hands of media who operate beyond national borders, who do not wish to collaborate or share knowledge. Such views encourage resignation, diffusion of responsibility and a culture of silence in which the problems created by the media are too easily accepted.

## Improving the situation

Working towards an improvement of this situation involves acknowledging the presence of these discourses, and finding solutions that take them into account. We indicate solutions in **three main contexts of intervention**: socio-technological, normative and regulatory, that encourage greater awareness of the problems, a proper articulation of their underlying conditions and a comprehensive framework upon which to develop intervention.

**In the socio-technological context**, we propose that real and diversified choices need to be offered in which audiences do not have to choose between engagement in the media or protection from pressures and intrusions. According to many stakeholders, young people know the risks associated with the use of media, they know that might be exploited or how to customize privacy settings, but such knowledge does not lead to action because that would have consequences for their everyday or social life. If action is taken, stakeholders are increasingly noticing young people looking for alternative lifestyles that involve switching off completely from the media. Audiences are thereby presented with a difficult, dichotomous choice in their attempt to manage their engagement with digital, interactive media. Either they have to accept the media environment as it is, with all the risks and intrusions it entails, or they have to withdraw completely. This choice is especially difficult to make for young people because media are highly integrated in their



everyday life and because there are social consequences in withdrawing. It is therefore important to find solutions that are not solely articulated in terms of technological interfaces, but also accounting for social dimensions.

**In the normative context**, we draw attention to the need to change the expectations that audiences have of their media environment. The failure of audiences to read grueling terms of service or regulate privacy settings should not be read as signs of apathy, but as indications that audiences are slowly accepting the drawbacks of their media landscape. Audiences, broadly speaking, do not have the privilege to act on their dislike of or disagreement with what a service entails. If they want to use it, they have to accept it wholly. At the same time, audiences seem to accept that certain norms, values or expectations do not apply in online environments. Such resignation rests on an understanding of the media environment as **too complex, too remote and too chaotic**.

**In the regulatory context**, we underline that the burden of coping with the media falls heavily on individuals. Audiences develop their own rules and ethics in using new media, developing their competences, but they have little power to change the media. Moreover, regulatory frameworks developed for broadcast and national media content are quickly becoming obsolete as transnational media and audiences are changing rapidly. Hence, regulation should encompass concerns around the media and focus on implications and consequences of media use. Normative differences between online and offline environments indicate that effort can be made to apply existing frameworks to the online world, rather than developing new frameworks.