Chapter 10

Transforming the news media
Overcoming old and new gender inequalities

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Gender inequalities have been at the core of debates and studies about media and communication for a long time. The media – as meaning-making institutions, and as an important economic sector – have been recognized as both a hindrance to advancements in gender equality across societies, and a possible solution to persisting stereotypes and discrimination. In this chapter we build on a consolidated body of knowledge and map out current international initiatives aimed at mainstreaming gender in and through the media; but we also argue that new lenses and approaches are needed to understand current transformations, mostly due to digital developments and globalization processes. We do so by addressing questions concerning the impact and implications of digital technologies in relation to working conditions in the news media, and by discussing the potential for change that may derive from gender-aware media policies and regulatory mechanisms in a multi-actor and multi-level environment.

December 2017. *Time* magazine devotes its cover to a collective "person of the year": "the silence breakers",[1] those women, from all walks of life, who have come to speak publicly of the harassment, abuses, and violence they underwent in their working environments. What started with individual acts of courage has grown into an emerging global movement, connected from the US to France and China by hashtags like #meetoo, #balancetonporc and #WoYeShi having been used millions of times in more than eighty countries. In a few weeks, a multiplicity of initiatives – from lists of alleged perpetrators to open letters published on major newspapers and joint declarations[2] – have attracted public attention globally. Controversial debates have involved

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1. http://time.com/time-person-of-the-year-2017-silence-breakers-choice/.
2. In India a list of 60 academics from across the country, accused of harassing behaviours, was posted on Facebook in November 2017, sparking wide debate amongst Indian feminists: https://thediplomat.com/2017/11/metoo-and-himtoo-come-to-india/. In France a letter published in Le Monde, signed by around 100 French women writers, performers and academics deplored the wave of "denunciations" that has followed claims of sexually assaulted women over decades in the US and elsewhere: http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2018/01/09/nous-defendons-une-liberte-d-importuner-indispensable-

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well known female media professionals and movie stars, thus receiving even broader attention in the media.

January 2018. Carrie Gracie, BBC China editor, leaves the company after discovering she had been, for years, paid much less than male colleagues occupying similar positions. In an open letter to BBC audience,[3] Gracie denounced "not only (the) unacceptably high pay for top presenters and managers but also an indefensible pay gap between men and women doing equal work … I simply want the BBC to abide by the law and value men and women equally". In consideration of the *Equality Act 2010*, which states that men and women doing equal work must receive equal pay, two hundred BBC women have made complaints only to be told repeatedly there is no pay discrimination in the company. Gracie asks: "Can we all be wrong?". BBC, a model public broadcasting assumed as a standard across the world, must face accusations of illegally perpetrating an unequal system of gender pay gap.

January 2018. The International Women's Media Foundation launches a new global campaign: "Make 2018 the year we end the sexual harassment of women journalists!", while Madrid-based Platform for the Defence of Free Expression (PDLI) announces the creation of an observatory to monitor the harassment of female journalists on social media in Spain, in cooperation with the Spanish Federation of Journalist Unions (FeSP). Referring to a study conducted by the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OCSE 2016), the PDLI denounces the harassment of female journalists as a growing threat to free expression. According to the study, hate speech online, extremely aggressive verbal tones and violent threats increasingly affect female journalists: A reflection of profoundly misogynous attitudes that social media can easily amplify, too often ending up threatening and silencing women who occupy positions where from they can make their voices heard.

The above-mentioned events are but the latest evidence in a long trajectory of gender inequalities that have involved the media and have been denounced for decades: the media have been exposed as a system where inequality between women and men can easily lead to abusive behaviours; the media contribute to framing/silencing inequality issues on the agenda; and the media, especially digital, are being used to mobilize against the persistence of patriarchal norms and structures, from Cinecittà to Hollywood.[4] A chain of old and new inequalities that today seems to gain renewed

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a-la-liberte-sexuelle_5239134_3232.html#eaS2UVg9T1IXi0cj.99. In Italy a joint statement – entitled "Dissenso comune" (Common dissent) – was released on February 1, 2018, by 120 women from the communication and movie industry, denouncing the system of gender inequalities in the country; and calling on all women to rewrite spaces of work and create a society able to reflect new equilibrium between women and men.

3. https://www.theguardian.com/media/2018/jan/08/carrie-gracie-letter-in-full.

4. World known presenter and actress Oprah Winfrey, in accepting the Cecil B. DeMille Award at Sunday's Golden Globe Awards in Beverly Hills, California, expressed her gratitude to all the women who have endured years of abuse and assault, and have not been heard or believed if they dared to speak their truth to the power of those men. The media across the globe has re-launched her call "Their time is up."

public recognition. As Denis McQuail states in his chapter in this volume, "differential representation of women treats women as inferiors to male protagonists or just as invisible". He continues that, in relation to gender, the notion "equality" is problematic since "the reality of most societies has involved discrimination against women". In the same vein, Hannu Nieminen in this volume highlights the importance of digitization as generating new forms and modalities of inequality that are still overlooked.

Gender inequalities and the media

Indeed "inequality" has been a major concern for feminist media scholars for decades, resulting in a consolidated subfield in media studies that has explored media content, as well as media operations and structures, working cultures and technological developments. Studies have been conducted across regions, cultural contexts and media genres. Issues of representation, working conditions, pay gaps, participation in decision-making roles have been explored and critically analysed (Byerly, 2012; Carter, Steiner & McLaughlin, 2014; Gallagher, 2005, 2014; McLaughlin & Carter, 2013; Ross, 2013).

Inequality "through the media" has been investigated in relation to the stereotyped representation of women, biased portrayal and the use of degrading images and language in media outlets, formats and genres, since the early '70s, from mass media (Tuchman et al., 1975) to filming characterization (Humm, 1977). Specifically focusing on the news media, data concerning unequal treatment of women and men as subjects in the news have been provided by the world-known Global Media Monitoring Project since 1995. The latest project Report (GMMP, 2015) once more highlighted a problematic reality: In 2015, women still made up only 24 per cent of the persons heard, read about or seen in newspaper, television and radio news, exactly as they did in 2010. The journalistic gender lens in source selection is not only male centred, but also skewed towards a certain kind of masculinity when selecting interviewees for all types of views, from "expert" opinion to "ordinary" person testimonies. Looking for news practices that may help promoting change, like a focus on issues of concern of women (as well as other social groups), the GMMP report also highlighted that only 9 per cent of stories overall contained reference to legal rights or policy frameworks and that only 4 per cent of stories clearly challenged gender stereotypes; a one percentage point change since 2005.

Inequality "in the media" has been a parallel concern. One of the first efforts to document gender inequalities in decision-making was a UNESCO-commissioned report titled "Women and Media Decision-making: The Invisible Barriers" (Gallagher, 1987). Structural, organizational and behavioural inequalities were again identified as elements characterizing the sector some ten years later, in a 1995 study across 43 nations, focusing on employment patterns in the media (Gallagher, 1995). In 2005, women's experiences of broadcast journalism indicated that despite the numbers entering the industry, they did not proportionately advance into decision-making roles (Carter et al., 1998).

Similar results emerged from a 2012 investigation promoted by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) across 99 media companies in 28 European countries. The study showed that women occupy only 16 per cent of the top level decision-making positions (CEOs or company president) while their participation in decision-making, at all levels, from CEO to head of unit and board members, is only 32 per cent on average. The proportion of women in leadership positions tends to be higher in public media organisations, but significant differences are found across Europe (EIGE, 2013; see also Ross and Padovani, 2017).

Focusing on the world's regions, the "Global Report on the Status of Women in the Media" (IWMF 2012) exposed the global dimension of the problem. Examining more than 500 companies in 59 countries, researchers found that 73 per cent of top management jobs are occupied by men worldwide. Some regional features and differences were also highlighted: the highest representation of women in both governance and top management was found in Eastern Europe (33% and 43%, respectively) and Nordic Europe (36% and 37%, respectively),[5] while in Asia and Oceania women were barely 13 per cent of those in senior management.

Finally, a study made public by Nordicom in February 2018, titled "The media is a male business", reveals that "The leadership of the 100 largest international media corporations is dominated by men". Across all major transnational companies – those that produce content for print, television, film and online properties, as well as cable companies that control the distribution of programming and produce content themselves – gender inclusiveness in leadership and managerial positions remains a highly problematic issue: "The male dominance crosses national borders and is visible in all types of media corporations. On average, 80 per cent of directors are men, 17 per cent of top management officers are women and there are only six female CEOs leading corporations on the top-100 list" (Nordicom, 2018).

These data show that gender inequalities are a worldwide reality that calls for renewed efforts in untangling the constellation of factors which systematically "discourage and block women's entry into the news field, push those who made it out of the profession, and keep those who have endured down and siloed in specific roles away from decision-making and policy-setting positions." (Melki & Mallat, 2017: 57).

Addressing gender inequalities in and through the media: A global concern

Though loosely defined, "gender equality" has thus become a "master frame" and a "policy goal" in gender and media scholarship as well as in professional venues. Over the past twenty-plus years, a growing awareness of the issues at stake is demonstrated by interventions by federations of public broadcasters, from the European Broadcasting Union's "Charter for Equal Opportunities for Women in Broadcasting" adopted in 1995, to the most recent initiatives launched by the Permanent Conference of Public Broadcasters

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5. For an explanation of similar results characterizing very different cultural and historical contexts, see IWMF Report, Chapters 5 and 6.

in the Mediterranean (COPEAM) and its Gender Equality Commission. International professional organizations have been created with the specific aim of transforming gendered structures in television, film, radio and web-based journalism, amongst which the International Association of Women in Radio & Television (IAWRT), the International Media Women Foundation (IWMF) and the South African Gender Links.

International unions have also given priority to the need to overcome gender-related inequalities in the news media, such as the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), whose longstanding commitment to gender equality is demonstrated by a number of publications and toolkits (IFJ 2012; IFJ & UNESCO 2009; IFJ & WACC 2012) and, most recently, by the appointment of a Gender Council, the work of which has been officially included in the IFJ Constitution in 2016.

Regional and international governmental organizations have also been active in denouncing and contrasting gender inequalities in the media. Alongside a long list of studies and provisions emanated from European institutions, we can mention the EIGE's inclusion of gender and media issues in their follow up to the Beijing Platform for Action and in their Dataset of Good Practices to promote gender equality.[6] Furthermore, in the context of the 2030 United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UNESCO has developed programs and tools to foster gender equality in and through the media, including a set of "Gender-sensitive Indicators for Media" (2012); and UN Women has launched a "Step It Up for Gender Equality Media Compact" 2015, urging major transnational media corporations to disrupt stereotypes and biases, and increase the number of women, particularly in leadership and decision-making functions. Finally, it is worth mentioning the review theme addressed at the 62nd gathering of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), in New York in March 2018: "Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women".

All these interventions reflect a growing awareness of the unequal conditions that affect women and men, and reproduce gendered relations in the media sector well into the 21st century. Though some progress has been made over the years, all international studies (EIGE 2013; GMMP, 2015; IWMF, 2012) highlight the slow pace of change and the risk of step-backs that prevent the consolidation of equality practices. In this context, it is to be highlighted that on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing in 1995) – where Women and Media issues were included as one of the priority areas to achieve gender equality in society[7] – another international initiative was launched, with the support of UNESCO: a Global

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6.   See: http://eige.europa.eu/beijing-platform-for-action. Good practices in gender mainstreaming in the media sector can be found at: http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/good-practices?topic[]=627.

7.   Section J of the Beijing Platform for Action addressed the diverse inequality issues affecting women in the media and included a number of Recommendations for governments, international organizations, the media themselves and civic organizations. The text can be found at: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf.

Alliance for Media and Gender (GAMAG) which brings together a plurality of engaged stakeholders – governmental and non-governmental, professional and academic – and is conceived as a global movement to promote gender equality in and through media.

One of the outcomes of the GAMAG is an evolving global agenda (IAMCR/Unesco 2014; IAMCR/GAMAG/Unesco forthcoming 2018). From general concerns for women's communication rights to feminist perspectives on communication and media in digital times, a comprehensive research agenda to tackle ever-changing dimensions of inequality is in the making; one that highlights a plurality of issues from sexualisation and pornography in ICT content, to safety of women journalists offline and online, gender mainstreaming in broadcasting organisations and women's political participation in media, as well as gender-sensitive curricula for media professionals.

Known unknowns about media gender inequalities

Some of these themes have been widely investigated over the past decades, but today new lenses and approaches are needed to understand current transformations, mostly due to digital developments and globalization processes. Implications for education and working conditions in the news-making sector, new skills and abilities needed in a transformed technological environment, exposure and safety of professionals through the social media, are all new issues to be explored in their gendered nature.

Other issues, though on the agenda for decades, have attracted limited attention, both in scholarly circles and in the practice of media companies and institutional actors. Amongst these are the nexus between media gender inequalities and policy interventions at different levels. Interestingly, these aspects are today widely referred to in official documents and debates. In response to this widespread call for specific attention on policy aspects, we argue that theoretically sound and comprehensive analytical frameworks are needed to acquire proper understanding of the "what, why and how" of regulatory arrangements (Padovani, 2014a, 2018; Padovani & Pavan, 2017).

In the following paragraphs we focus on two aspects, with the aim of fostering a better understanding of how gender unequal relations are reproduced and transformed in contemporary media: the impact and implications of digital technologies in relation to working conditions are discussed in the next paragraph, while issues concerning the adoption of regulatory measures are elaborated upon in the following one, providing an account of policy-related research, current debates and practices in a multi-level perspective.

In this way, we address two of the underlying questions addressed in this collection, with a focus on gendered relations: What role do digital technologies play in creating and/or reducing inequalities? In what way and to what extent do media and communication (policies), in different countries and regions, contribute to overcoming inequalities?

In elaborating on the two aspects, we aim at contributing to the above-mentioned research agenda. We also acknowledge some of the many good practices that have

been elaborated to foster gender equality, specifically in the areas of digital news making and of policy formulation. In the concluding remarks, we propose an analytical framework that may help positioning the two aspects discussed in this chapter in the broader context of media inequalities analysis; a framework that invites addressing different dimensions of inequality at their intersections, while stressing the centrality of policy interventions in the search for sustainable solutions.

Gender inequalities revised: Participation and working conditions related to digital skills and data journalism

When studying working conditions and participation in news production from a gender perspective, it is important to take into account transitions in the news industry (Fenton, 2010; Paulussen & Ugille, 2010; Usher, 2015). These trends had an impact on the routines, professional practices and work environment of journalists (Liu, 2006; McChesney, 2004; McNair, 1998). It has been repeatedly demonstrated that the intensified work regime combined with the arrival of digital technologies results in an increased demand for multi-skilled journalists that can produce content for print, audio-visual, and online platforms (Quinn & Filak, 2005; Vergeer, Pleijter & Hermans, 2011). Although technological innovation cannot be considered the sole driver of change, its impact on different layers of the journalistic profession cannot be underestimated (Compton, 2010). This part of the chapter differentiates between two consequences related to digitalization and offers insight into their gendered repercussions.

First, technological changes in the production process have influenced journalists' routines and working conditions in general. Journalism scholars have focused on the adoption of technology in newsrooms (Boczkowski, 2004; Garrison, 2001; Maier, 2000). These studies have shown that there is a growing demand for digital skills such as basic or more advanced computer skills, social media skills, audio-visual editing, and mobile technology skills. Second, in an increasingly digitalized context, technologically driven forms of journalism have emerged. Data journalism is one of these forms, situated between journalism and the computer field (Borges-Rey, 2016; Fink & Anderson, 2015; Gynnild, 2014; Stavelin, 2013). In data journalism, "traditional journalistic working methods are mixed with data analysis, programming and visualization techniques" (Nygren, Appelgren & Huttenrauch, 2012, as cited in Appelgren & Nygren, 2014: 394). Characteristic of data journalism is its multifaceted interactions with the field of computer sciences (Weber & Rall, 2012; Lewis & Usher, 2014). This interaction results in an exchange of cultural values between data journalism and the computer field.

It is necessary to ask questions about the gender aspects of technological innovation in the profession. The field of feminist technology studies has considered the relationship of gender and technology (Bray, 2007; Bury, 2011; Faulkner, 2001; Valgaeren, 2001; Wajcman, 2007; Youngs, 2005); and we build on those studies to gain insight into the gender dimensions of the consequences related to technological innovation in

journalism. This part of the chapter is based on a PhD research on the gender dimensions of technological innovation in journalism, based on qualitative interviews with a cross-national sample of 27 journalists from different generations, media sectors, and positions that had varying levels of digital expertise (De Vuyst, 2016).

Digital skills

Technological innovation offers both challenges and opportunities for female journalists. First, digital skills are increasingly important in journalism in general. Particularly more advanced ICT skills related to programming, coding and data visualization, are associated with high levels of status. Both the evaluation and accumulation of digital skills appear to be gendered (De Vuyst & Raeymaeckers, 2017). Several female interviewees had experienced that their digital skills are evaluated based on a gender binary. Their technological competence was often doubted and they had the feeling that they had to prove their digital skills twice as much as their male colleagues. This is in line with previous research on women in the ICT sector that shows that ICT skills are gendered based on the stereotype that men are "naturally" more technologically competent than women (Faulkner, 2001; Henwood, 1998). Also female journalists often took a subject position of lower self-confidence towards digital skills than their male colleagues.

Furthermore, the study indicated that the accumulation of digital skills is also gendered (De Vuyst & Raeymaeckers, 2017). The majority of the participants had not gained their digital expertise through traditional journalism education, but through self-study, for example, by participating in online courses, hackathons, and evening classes. Participation demanded an additional time investment after working hours. For several female interviewees, the difficult combination of a disproportional share of the household tasks with a job in journalism prevented them from staying up to date with all the latest innovations.

Data journalism

The gender perspective in data journalism is double. On the one hand, several interviewed data journalists had the impression that data journalism is a new field that was still open to everyone – regardless of gender (De Vuyst, 2018). They believed that digital skills were more important than personal network relationships for entering and building a career in data journalism. This had gendered consequences. First, several women entered data journalism to avoid barriers that limited their opportunities in traditional journalism (Melin, 2008), for example, the old boy's network, the gendered division of news topics and sexism.

On the other hand, data journalism was not completely free of gender-related obstacles. Positions and roles in data journalism were considered gendered. As the participants in the research described: coding and development are still perceived as "the geeky part" of data journalism, and geeky implies less access for women. This is

in line with offered explanations for the underrepresentation of women in the computer field, in the sense that it is associated with a geek mythology, which is not in accordance with the female gender role (Corneliussen, 2014; Margolis & Fisher, 2002; Rasmussen & Håpnes, 1991; Turkle, 1984). One could suppose that the traditional glass ceiling is accompanied by the implications of a coding ceiling (De Vuyst, 2018).

Empowerment through technology

Nevertheless, female interviewees also described strategies in relation to digital skills that are aimed at improving their status in the profession (De Vuyst, 2018; De Vuyst & Raeymaeckers, 2017). Some female journalists were expressing their passion for technology and demonstrating their skills in ways that did not conform to traditional gender expectations. They were aiming for empowerment through technology. In these networks, female journalists collaborated with women in the computer field to increase their digital skills and break stereotypes. The experience of similar gender barriers created a sense of solidarity and a spirit of emancipation. The advantages of these initiatives are not only related to the digital training possibilities, but also to the positive impact and self-confidence building of female journalists towards digital technology.

Media gender inequalities: Searching for policy interventions

Since the Beijing Conference in 1995, developing gender-aware media policies has been indicated as one of the steps to be taken in order to meet the goals of Section J of the Beijing Platform for Action (PfA): Namely, promoting equal access to the media and decision-making (J1), and eliminating gender stereotypes in media content (J2). The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) called upon governments and other actors to promote "an active policy of mainstreaming of a gender perspective in (media) policies and programs" (par. 237). Furthermore, it called for media organizations themselves to "elaborate and strengthen self-regulatory mechanisms and codes of conduct" to comply with the objectives in Section J (par. 236 and 244.a/b). Those recommendations have been restated on various international occasions, from the Commission on the Status of Women[8] to the World Summit on Information Society.[9]

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8. At its 47th meeting, in March 2003, the Commission on the Status of Women, highlighted the risk that gender "differences (in representation, access and use of media and information technologies) have important implications for policy development at national, regional and international levels (CSW47 2003_Final, par. 2). In its final Report, the Commission indicated, as a very first Recommendation for action, that of ensuring "women's early and full participation in the development and implementation of national policies, legislation, … strategies and regulatory and technical instruments in the field of information and communication technologies (ICT) and media and communications" while creating adequate "monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure implementation of gender-sensitive policies and regulations as well as to analyse the gender impact of such policies" (CSW47 2003_Final, par. 4a).

9. See the WSIS "Plan of Action" adopted in Geneva in December 2003, par. C6 Enabling Environments: "Governments, in collaboration with stakeholders, are encouraged to formulate conducive

In spite of such explicit recognition of the centrality of regulatory arrangements to promote and sustain gender equality in the media and ICTs, the recommendations made since Beijing have been widely disregarded by policy and media actors alike across the world's regions and policy levels (Padovani & Pavan 2017).

What policies for media gender equality?

A few scholars have adopted a gender lens when focusing on supranational debates around media and communication, and resulting policy documents (Gallagher, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014; Jensen, 2008, 2010, 2013). Reflecting on events such as the Beijing Conference, UNESCO-promoted initiatives or the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), they have highlighted the main areas of concern expressed on those circles, i.e. how gender issues are framed; persisting stereotyped depictions of men and women in media and ICT content; increase in online pornographic materials; the need for broad dissemination of information about women's rights, and of orienting the media and ICTs towards values such as respect and non-discrimination; the need to build infrastructure and communications networks that benefit women; and concerns about education, training and career development.

Critical reflections have also highlighted gender gaps in the very conduct of international encounters, as well as their implication for the design of policy interventions. They have done so by highlighting the lack of women presence, voices and expertise; a prevailing rhetorical reference to "women's issue", and a limited understanding of the structural gender inequalities that characterize the media; the lack of sex disaggregated data upon which informed recommendations should be made, and of gender-sensitive analysis of the social, cultural and economic situations that affect media access e use; difficulties in acknowledging gender differences in the ideation, implementation and evaluation phases of media and ICT policies (Drossou & Jensen 2003-2005; Doria 2015; Gurumurthy & Chami 2010, 2014).

At the level of the European Union, recent studies have highlighted how policy-making related to the media and audio-visual industries, as well as to digital developments, has been characterized by a lack of attention to gender (equality) issues (Padovani, 2016). Furthermore, in spite of the many interventions carried out by European institutions to tackle issues of stereotypical representation in media and advertising, and equal access to decision-making positions in the sector, the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament have often addressed the problems on the basis of different, and sometimes contrasting, priorities (Ross & Padovani, 2017). Negotiation between conflicting values – in particular gender equality and mainstreaming[10] versus freedom of expression – have often prevented

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ICT policies that foster entrepreneurship, innovation and investment, and with particular reference to the promotion of participation by women". Accessible at: http://www.itu.int/net/wsis/documents/doc_multi.asp?lang=en&id=1161|1160.

10. Proposed as a transformative approach to gender inequalities since the Beijing Conference, "gender mainstreaming" has been considered an "organizing principle" to ensure that decision-making takes

placing gender-related issues at the core of media policy initiatives (Gallagher, 2011), while "soft measures" – essentially recommendations to media organizations to adopt self-regulatory measures – have been the main result of policy interventions (Sarikakis & Nguyen, 2009).

Comprehensive and comparative research at the national level is yet to be conducted in order to assess the extent to which gender mainstreaming has been implemented in media policies, and how far national strategies for gender equality acknowledge the centrality of the media and digital technologies. In this respect, only preliminary findings of a "Global Survey on Gender and Media" (UNESCO, 2016) are available, showing that just 35 per cent of world governments have integrated gender in their national media policies and programs.

An explicit commitment of independent media regulatory authorities would also be relevant to the politics of media gender equality. Initial attempts to map good practices,[11] including those carried out by regulatory bodies, result in a problematic picture of the extent to which such entities explicitly assume gender equality as a core component of their mandate. A meaningful exception in this area is the *Réseau Francophone des Régulateurs des Médias*, which conducted a comparative study of the policies and measures on gender equality promoted by member regulators (RE-FRAM, 2011), resulting in the adoption of a Declaration for Equality Between Men and Women in the Audiovisual Media.

Finally, internally adopted policies by media organizations are to be considered: Voluntary measures such as gender-equality plans, policies for maternal and paternal leave, policies to contrast sexual harassment, codes of conduct that define the basic principles and goals according to which gender-aware media should operate, and sometimes establish, support mechanisms. These aspects have been investigated in recent international studies.

According to the EIGE study on *Advancing gender equality in decision-making in media industries* (EIGE, 2013), only 26 per cent of selected ninety-nine media organizations across Europe (including all public broadcasters and major private companies) have a gender equality policy or code of conduct in place; 21 per cent have equality of opportunities or diversity policies (EIGE, 2013: 37; Ostlin & Nenadich 2017).

Similarly, the *Global Report on the Status of Women in the Media* (IWMF, 2012), reported that slightly more than half of the 522 surveyed companies across the world

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into account men's and women's different interests and needs (Wiener 2007); and defined as "The systematic integration of the respective situations, priorities and needs of women and men in all policies and with a view to promoting equality between women and men and mobilizing all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality by actively and openly taking into account, at the planning stage, their effects on the respective situations of women and men in implementation, monitoring and evaluation" (European Commission COM(96)67 final). For a discussion on its application in European communication/digital strategies, see Padovani 2016.

11. We refer to an EU-funder project entitled "Advancing Gender Equality in Media Industries" (AGEMI) the aim of which is to disseminate good practices for gender equality in the media; and to a series of policy-relevant good practices collected in the context of another EU-funded project called "Med-Media" aimed at supporting media reforms in the Southern Mediterranean region.

have an established company-wide policy on gender equity. The average masks very different situations: from 16 per cent policy adoption in Eastern Europe to 69 per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa and Western Europe. Some regions, including Eastern Europe and Southern Africa, show quite consistent patterns in the adoption of policy measures and support mechanisms at the organizational level; while meaningful internal variability characterizes other regions, like the Americas, the Middle East and North Africa. Circumstances within each geo-cultural context – such as gender-related cultural orientation and traditions, the existence of national equity normative frameworks, the status of women in society, and women's empowerment (IWMF, 2011: 34) – may play a role in fostering policy adoption, but are yet to be investigated. The same goes for the relationship between national laws and workplace policies, as well as the possible impact of internal measures' adoption on more gender equal media performance.[12]

Why gender-responsive media policies?

The existence of legal frameworks at the national level, or of self-regulatory measures and support mechanisms within media organizations, suggest that institutions and the media acknowledge gender inequalities and put in place instruments to address them. On the contrary, the low level of adoption reflects either a gender-neutral approach – where the media intend to operate on the basis of merit and do not feel it necessary to do anything which advantages women – or, more often, a gender-blind approach – where media organizations believe they do not have a problem with discrimination (EIGE, 2013: 38).

Beyond signaling stakeholders' commitment, the adoption of regulatory measures can also anticipate and foster change. Within media organizations, formally adopted equality policies and support mechanisms are core to define principles and goals, and also provide a framework to assess progress (Gallagher, 2011, 2014, 2017). National-level media policies are necessary means to promote the cultural transformation that would lead to a more equal redistribution of material as well as symbolic resources (Chaher, 2014). International normative frameworks that articulate gender equality for both traditional and digital media can be key towards mainstreaming gender in communication governing arrangements (Padovani, 2014b). Moreover, in a situation where it is clear that progress is not a linear process and step-backs are always a possibility (GMMP, 2015), policy measures can contribute to guarantee sustainability of positive achievements in more equal gender relations over time by establishing sanctioning elements (Gallagher, 2011, 2017). At the same time, it is to be noted that policy formulation and adoption may become a challenge to mainstreaming gender equality: too often policies and program are adopted, but implementation remains

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12. Initial explorations in this directions are being made in the context of a Swedish Council of Research-funded international projects – Comparing Gender and Media Equality across the Globe (info at: https://jmg.gu.se) – where datasets from different international projects have been consolidated in a single database, for the first time allowing investigating possible correlations between different variables concerning gender inequality in the media. Resulting publications are expected by 2019.

weak. This may be due to limited effort in accompanying formal provisions with support measures like mentoring or monitoring programs, training of managerial staff, the establishment of gender councils. Other times, formal measures are the result of a state's or organization's commitment to normative frameworks, but no serious consideration is given to the needed transformation of organizational cultures. Moreover, when policies are in place a "normalization" effect may intervene, and no further commitments are made to make gender mainstreaming a reality (EIGE, 2013; IWMF, 2012; Ross & Padovani, 2017).

Therefore, persistence of gender inequality patterns and the limited knowledge acquired to date on the policy dimension, invite a better understanding of the relevance of policy in meeting the goal of gender equality in and through the media. Aspects that would require further investigation include: The extent of policy adoption and related constrains; the roles and interests of different stakeholders in fostering regulatory arrangements (see Chaher, 2014; Von Lurzer, 2017); the discursive frames according to which gender inequalities are addressed in policy documents (Lombardo & Meier, 2009); the tension between conflicting principles that guide media operations (Gallagher, 2011); and the actual implementation of those principles and provisions (Engeli et al., 2015). More research – focused, transnational, and comparative – is needed to gain a comprehensive understanding of how policies relate to gender equality in practice, in different geo-cultural and socio-economic contexts.

What's next?

Future research to better understand (digital) media gendered realities and policy design to counter inequalities, should first acknowledge that both "gender" and "equality" are highly contested concepts, and the very meaning of "gender equality" is transformed according to the context of use (Verloo, 2007; Lombardo & Meier, 2009). Even in the media field, there is no agreed upon definition of what "gender equality" means: The problem is raised, the plural dimensions of inequality affecting women in the sector are highlighted, but the two key concepts are seldom problematized. "Gender equality" often ends up being used as a buzzword whose meaning is taken for granted, while different understandings characterize the use of the concept by different actors. This situation, and conceptual gap, may limit the possibility to design and implement adequate solutions. Efforts should therefore be made to problematize concepts and policy issues (Bacchi 1999, 2012), and to acknowledge, for instance, the contribution of intersectional scholarship (Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1989; Hancock, 2007) that invite due consideration for the multiple and intersecting axes of domination that constitute unequal relations in the media environment.

Secondly, theoretically grounded definitions should be elaborated in support of both research and policy interventions. Positioning our contribution in a tradition of "gender policy analysis" that looks at structural dynamics of unequal gendered

relations in society,[13] we hereby propose an operational definition of media gender equality that may guide future research:

> A condition whereby equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities in the media and communication environment are enjoyed by every person, irrespective of their sex, and in due consideration of the multiple intersections between gendered relations and other axes of unequal power relations, based on ethnicity, age, class or sexual orientation. Gender equality in and through the media and ICT is, therefore, a goal for policy interventions – including the adoption of codes and standards, formal and informal governing arrangements – at the level of individual media, national laws and regulation, supranational agreements and transnational advocacy efforts. Such interventions should consider the interplay of different dimensions of gender inequality, including content and representation of women and men, participation and access to infrastructures and managerial positions, work and financial resources, information and knowledge, education and violence.[14]

This definition offers a basis from which to interrogate both research and policy interventions as to their capacity to reflect and address the multiplicity of interrelated gendered practices and meanings (Walby, 2009), thus focusing on processes that characterize, produce, reproduce or challenge gender disparities in the media domain.

As a contribution to future analyses, we also propose to think of these systems of practices, meanings, and processes as *media gender equality regimes* (Padovani, 2018). Bridging International Relation theory (Krasner, 1992; Onuf, 1989) and Gender Studies (Connell, 2009; Walby, 2004, 2009; Kardam, 2004), the "regime" concept invites moving beyond considering the statistical and numerical evidence of unequal experiences of women and men, to also acknowledge and address the underlying and multiple power relations that can be found in societies and institutions, including the media sector, and the relevance of policy formulation and adoption therein. In fact, adopting a *media gender equality regimes* approach offers a threefold opportunity.

First, gender inequalities in the media persist in areas of representation and recognition, access and inclusion, working conditions and decision-making, education

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13.   Gender analysis understands gender as socially constructed relations, and addresses the challenges of unequal gender structures and norms, while questioning systemic causes of unequal power relations between women and men, also incorporating a multidimensional character of gender (Kantola & Lombardo, 2017).

14.   It goes beyond the scope of this chapter to address this definitional issue in depth. Further reflections can be found in Padovani (2018). Suffice here to say that the proposed definition includes different elements that are deemed important to deal with a concept that is widely used, value-laden but seldom problematized in its potential for politicizing inequality issues across the media and related policies. These elements are: a broad understanding of 'media'; a multi-actor perspective to indicate the plurality of spheres and responsibilities involved in fostering gender equality; a recognition of the dual nature of the concept, that is/can be used in descriptive as well as prescriptive terms; the multi-dimensional nature of gender inequalities as they are reproduced across the media; the need to ultimately address structural unequal power relations, thus adopting a transformative perspective.

and violence, but they are rarely investigated, nor addressed, in their intersection (Djerf-Pierre, 2011). A *media gender equality regimes* approach allows focusing not on single, specific forms of inequality, but on the interplay and intersection of multiple forms of privilege and disadvantage (Connell, 2009). In this sense, future investigations engaging with the potential of digital technologies to overcome or/and reproduce gender inequalities could consider the impact and implication of the digital on multiple dimensions of (in)equality.

Second, as regimes are bound together by "implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge …" (Krasner, 1982), the centrality of regulatory elements in *media gender equality regimes* becomes evident. In this perspective, the ideation, design, development, adoption and implementation of governing arrangements for the media – from public policies, to formal provisions and programs adopted at the level of individual media companies – should be assessed in terms of their gender-responsiveness; consistently with the Beijing Plan for Action.

Third, *media gender equality regimes* should be operationalized and empirically explored, at any one level of media policy identified above. The practices and processes that reproduce gender disparities in the media sector can be investigated at the supranational as well as at the national level, as well as the principles and norms, and regulatory arrangements adopted by media organizations, national parliaments, transnational networks responsible for defining normative frameworks for the media, traditional and digital.

As we search for new ground to enrich and innovate a long tradition of scholarly work, *media gender equality regimes* may provide a useful analytical tool towards a next generation of policy-aware media gender in-/equality studies.

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