

## Thinking about platforming with more traditional mediatization: Lessons from audiovisual analysis

Éric George\*, Université du Québec à Montréal, École des médias, Canada

Justine Dorval, Université du Québec à Montréal, Faculté de communication, Canada

Édouard Germain, Université du Québec à Montréal, Faculté de communication, Canada

\*Corresponding author: george.eric@uqam.ca

### Abstract

Since the mid-1990s, film and television industries are more and more confronted with the appearance of new intermediation services which have created platforms. In a project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), we try to analyze the place and role that these new services are taking in the audiovisual sector. Our corpus is composed of the platforms of four companies that have developed activities on a vast international scale, Netflix (with its service of the same name), Amazon (Prime Video service), Disney (Disney+) and Apple (Apple TV+). Based on our corpus, it seems to us that some changes have been the result of firms' activities, but that it is not as linear as it may appear at first sight. Transformations are at work but there is also some "Old Media Persistence." Thus, we find a certain "contamination" of old practices originating from the organization of industrial channels and forms in the mutations currently presented by these new intermediation services.

### Keywords

digitalization, cultural industries, audiovisual, firms, platforms, change, capitalism

## 1 Introduction

Since the mid-1990s, in a context characterized by the digitalization of the processes of creation, production, distribution, and reception of audiovisual products, the liberalization of legislation and regulations, the financialization and the globalization of economies as well as the rise of new cultural practices, film and television industries are more and more confronted with the appearance of new intermediation services. Often set up by communication industries (telecommunications, informatics, and the Internet), these digital platforms offer new forms of intermediation (web-based offer, absence of advertising, premium service, low-cost subscription, etc.) that compete with those of "traditional" distributors, their aim consisting in most cases of facilitating or renewing access to pre-existing products in a more or less selective and prescriptive manner (Mœglin, 2005). These new services often rely on financial capacities that are much

greater than those of local cultural industries to obtain exclusive broadcasting rights (Benhamou & Farchy, 2014; Latournerie, 2001). They have little or no tax burden to pay and no specific regulatory framework to follow, whereas traditional distributors contribute to the financing of television production and must take into account the requirements of national laws, like the 1991 Broadcasting Act in Canada (Claus, 2017).

In a project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) we try to analyze the place and role that new services of Subscription Video on Demand (SVOD) are taking in the audiovisual – film and television – sector. At the Canadian scale, we both study four national platforms (ICITtou.tv, Crave, Club Illico, and GEM) and four international platforms, Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+, and Apple TV+. These last ones are constituting our corpus in this paper.

The focus will be put on the theme of this Thematic Section "Old Media Persistence."



We will begin by introducing some theoretical and methodological elements. Next, we will continue by exploring to what extent these new intermediaries call into question the traditional functioning of the film and television industries, by looking at the implications upstream and downstream of these industries, by questioning whether or not the traditional media chronology for feature films is respected, and by studying whether new viewing practices for television series are developing or not.

## 2 Theoretical and methodological elements

Number of experts consider platforms as matchmakers (Evans & Schmalensee, 2016) or put the emphasis on the idea of “platform-mediated networks” (McIntyre & Srinivasan, 2017), which interface among different sides. This can mean various kinds of institutional actors (or complementors), as well as end-users (i.e., consumers), thereby constituting multisided markets. While multisided markets are not new, over the last two decades they became much more prevalent with the advent of digital technologies affording networking and with the creation of platforms. Benkler (2006) theorized on the existence of a “networked information economy,” which could contribute to major changes in the dominance of the industrial mode of information production. This idea of a time of disruption in the cultural industries was also promoted by Henry Jenkins and his concept of convergence. In the mid-2000, Jenkins anticipated a convergence of media that would lead to a blurring of the boundaries between the historical branches of the cultural industries, with this inevitable merger giving rise to a sort of meta-branch: transmedia (Jenkins, 2008). Many other social actors have also developed comments favorizing major changes. Among them, Jeff Bezos, CEO of Amazon, has often publicly opposed traditional intermediaries while underlining the great opposition between the old analogue age and the new digital one. In this digital age, anyone could create something, find an audience and allow the market to determine

the appropriate economic form according to Bezos (Rimaud, 2019, p. 73).

Our own approach tends to go in the sense of the political economic perspective that shows the dominance of a small number of international actors, often symbolized by the acronym GAFAM (Fuchs, 2017; Van Dijck, 2013). Under the digital age, cultural industries do not seem more and more dissolved in a global democratization of the expression of creativity. On the contrary, several researchers have documented ownership concentration in Canada and other countries’ industries and conclude that this process of concentration stays typical of current capitalism (e.g., Winseck & Jin, 2011). More, if there is any convergence, this one tends to link together communication industries (from telecommunications, informatics, and the Internet) and cultural industries (cinema, television, music, radio, and so on) on a global scale – and not only at a national level – but with various kind of relationships depending of traditional activities of main firms and relations of power between transnational and local platforms (Bouquillion, 2008; Winseck & Jin, 2011).

Platforms constitute a new mode of mediatization which aims to ensure the central place of an organization, most often a private company, in the cultural sector within which it deploys its activities. This concept also refers to the articulation of activities of various operators – including consumers mobilized in the sector – as well as to diverse modes of valorization. More specifically, this paper concerns the audiovisual sector, which includes cinema and television (Ménard, 2004). On the one hand, it remains relevant to distinguish them in certain respects: quasi-generalized theatrical release of cinema films, lower cost for television programs, participation in often distinct festivals, unique creation for cinema productions versus serial creation for those made for television). But on the other hand, since the development of television, they have been more and more linked together.

Our research is based on a documentary fund including sources of various origins, annual reports of companies, articles of journalists, and academic texts. A contrastive analysis (George, 2018) between Netflix,

Amazon, Disney, and Apple tries to put the emphasis on elements that seem relevant in order to understand how they fit into the traditional sectors of cinema and television in a certain continuity and, on the other hand, how their activities can perhaps contribute to changes, or even lead to disruptive situations that call into question the ways in which the two sectors operate : presence of platforms downstream but also upstream (part 3), the respect or not of media chronology in the case of film production (part 4), the media coverage of TV series (part 5).

### 3 An increasingly systematic presence downstream but also upstream

A parallel analysis of the activities of Netflix, Amazon, Disney, and Apple indicates firstly that these ones present a certain number of specificities depending on the history of each firm. Netflix is a company whose main activity has always been the distribution of audiovisual products, initially on DVD and then online. Subscription Video on Demand (SVOD) is therefore the historical core of its activities. For Amazon, on the other hand, the Prime Video service is just one among many e-commerce activities of the firm. Disney constitutes a giant of the cultural industries, and not only of the audiovisual sector. Consequently, SVOD may be considered as an extension of its activities within the cultural industries. From this point of view, even if Disney differs from Netflix, there are certain common elements here and indeed a certain convergence. We will come back to this. Finally, Apple is another different case, as the company comes from communication industries and in particular from computer industries. As for Amazon, its platform is not the core of its activities but a supplement whose importance in the medium term is not yet known. While the stories are quite different, we will also see that there may be some convergence in terms of activities.

Revenues of Netflix depend on its subscriptions with two requirements: firstly, the necessity to always increase the number of subscribers and secondly to ensure the highest possible retention. For this reason, having

an attractive catalog of a considerable size is crucial. While Netflix's management had originally focused on downstream distribution, it made a change in 2013 with the production of a now iconic series, *House of Cards* (Netflix, 2019, p. 9). Subsequently, the company invested considerably in productions distributed under the "Netflix Originals" label. It has thus focused on creating a catalog with a very wide range of texts, mainly films and television series. In fact, the catalog includes four types of productions:

- 1) the (co)production of original creations. The company has put emphasis on its role as producer since *House of Cards* was made available on the platform. However, it is important to emphasize here her role of co-producer. Production is always done by companies specialized in this activity at the heart of the audiovisual sector (Barthes, 2018, p. 3). In terms of (co)production, the Netflix model is therefore not very innovative.
- 2) the purchase of series and films in return for exclusive distribution over the widest possible territories (Barthes, 2018, p. 7). Netflix also attributes the label "Netflix Originals" to these programs, but if there is any exclusivity, it is about distribution. This is also a fairly classic way of doing things in the film and television industry.
- 3) the acquisition of proven programs and the development of sequels. Once again, the company uses the term "Netflix Originals" in connection with these productions. The originality here lies in the fact that the company buys the rights by securing the exclusive right to (co)produce the sequel of content that has already been produced and broadcast in the past. This is an attempt to solve the problem of uncertainty regarding the profitability of audiovisual creations (Bouquillion, 2008; Ménard, 2004; Miège, 2017). A well-known example is *Casa de Papel*, a Spanish series whose broadcasting rights for the first two seasons were acquired by Netflix before the company bought all the rights and ordered the production of the following seasons (Barthes, 2018, p. 8). We could also cite the well-known examples of *Black Mirror* or *Arrested Development*.

- 4) Finally, to enrich its catalog, the company practices the purchase of old content, like all its competitors. Thus, the Los Gatos firm bought the broadcasting rights to *Seinfeld* for a sum close to US\$ 500 million (Poirier, 2019). And this is just one example of the battle between platforms to build up a catalog of historical productions.

Finally, due to its extremely wide range of content, Netflix can be considered both a mass medium and a niche medium. Indeed, the platform offers a catalog that refers both to a “generalist” target, the widest possible audience, and to a “niche” target in order to take advantage of the Long-Tail phenomenon (Bourreau, Maillard, & Moreau, 2015, p. 180). Popular series but also horror films or impact documentaries, the offer is finally very diversified, although the vast majority of it corresponds above all to dramas or comedies. This multiplicity of genres on Netflix therefore allows it to also target “micro-audiences” (Hallinan & Striphas, 2016, p. 128).

Netflix has also developed (co)production of audiovisual products because it has no longer access to some contents since several companies like Disney have decided to create their own platforms (Desjardins, 2018, p. 5). Conversely, Netflix’s choice to support co-production has appeared over the years as a threat to its competitors (Bélanger & Lafontaine-Beaumier, 2015, p. 71). As Lucien Perticoz (2019) clearly points out, this has resulted in a cross movement between activities of the two companies: developing upstream in the audiovisual sector with its own (co)production for Netflix and investing downstream in the sector by creating a platform in the case of Disney.

For Disney, this is not a new choice. Historically, Disney is one of the world’s leading groups in the cultural industries sector. In the early 2000s, it was one of the first firms that tried to launch websites in order to distribute their productions as a priority. But these activities largely failed for several reasons (Bouquillion, 2008). The market for online distribution did not yet include enough potential customers, people connected to the network were still a minority in almost all markets in capitalist countries, networks were still too

small to ensure the distribution of high-quality video signals and the Internet still appeared to be a largely open network. Consequently, in the 2000s, it was more relevant for production companies such as Disney to distribute their creations widely through various media, including a number of Disney-branded television channels, which also points to the idea that the firm’s presence downstream in the industry is not new.

Development of the two other platforms, Amazon Prime Video and Apple TV+, also involves production upstream, whereas creation of the two interfaces has obviously been primarily downstream, through the control of relations with consumers. Both Amazon and Apple have realized the importance of controlling activities from upstream to downstream by building up catalogs of rights based on production and co-production, or even exclusive purchases, and by supervising audience practices by designing interfaces that allow them to offer modes of access to content.

As we have seen before, Jeff Bezos, Amazon’s founder, has taken position against norms concerning cultural industries. Even if his company has played a role in the transformation of the literary publishing sector, this seems to be less important in the audiovisual sector. For example, in 2011, Amazon bought the European company Lovefilm and transformed it into Amazon Studios in order to produce original creations. However, unlike Netflix, which leaves the production work to specialized companies, Amazon Prime Video produces or co-produces itself (Barthes, 2018, p. 3). Although investing large sums in the production of films and series for its platform, Amazon had not yet reached the investment of its main rival in 2020, making it less aggressive in its production strategy. It was also much less indebted than Netflix, thanks to the fact that revenues from its other activities allowed it to amortize its investments in original content (Levy, 2018). Until recently, Amazon remained above all a historical distributor, a position that can be seen from the study of the entire catalog of the Prime Video service, which is made up mainly of acquisitions and not original productions. However, the situation is now changing.

In 2021, Amazon bought the Hollywood major Metro Goldwyn Mayer (MGM) for US\$ 8.45 billion, while a short time earlier, a purchase of the same Hollywood studio by Apple for an estimated US\$ 6 billion had failed. This is the first audiovisual platform to acquire a major historical player in the audiovisual industry on an international scale (Forbes, 2021). With this acquisition, Amazon acquired the broadcasting rights of 4000 feature films (including *Basic Instinct*, *The Pink Panther*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Silence of the Lambs*, *Raging Bull*, *Rocky*, *Terminator*, *The Hobbit*, and all the James Bond films) and 17 000 television programs (such as *The Handmaid's Tale* or *Stargate*). This change of strategy was also symbolized in 2022 by a major investment in a new major series, *The Lord of the Rings. The Rings of power*. US\$ 250 million was invested to obtain the rights of the franchise, while a budget of US\$ 460 million was reserved for production. These amounts are huge but remember that in 2021, the company's turnover was US\$ 470 billion. Activities in the audiovisual sector are only one component among many others of the e-commerce giant.

In his comparative study of the relationship between Amazon and Netflix and traditional American television, Michael L. Wayne (2018, p. 726) noted that Amazon developed a much more harmonious relationship with the traditional television industry than Netflix, the expression used in English being "symbiotic relationship." For the latter, this was explained by the fact that Amazon sees its video platform as a mere phishing tool for its Prime service (Wayne, 2018, p. 726). Moreover, this tendency to cooperate with the audiovisual industry is reinforced with the fact that Amazon has not sought to disrupt the hierarchy of theatrical film releases unlike Netflix. Moreover, the company has frequently partnered with independent filmmakers (Olsen, 2018, p. 2) since the launch of its platform.

Finally, what about Apple, which comes from a completely different universe, that of the communication industries? Firstly, as soon as the platform was launched, its management decided to offer several months of free subscriptions on the condition of buying an Apple product, computer, tablet, phone

or other. Revenues from Apple TV+ are therefore considered as complements to the others. From this point of view, cultural productions are only one part of the company's possible sources of revenue and profit, more or less marginal.

Secondly, the platform quickly distinguished itself by a catalog that was more refined than that of its competitors and generally considered to be of good quality (Self, 2022). Distinction is therefore once again the order of the day, as was the case in its history when it launched its IT products, including computers, phones and tablets, with the company going so far as to create a universe of its own. In 2020, Apple TV+ had a limited catalog of 8 films and 27 series, all of which the company identified as "Apple Originals." That said, like Netflix, the company did not produce any of the content in its catalog. Nevertheless, in mid-2020, the Apple brand seemed to partially change its orientation by developing a policy of purchasing rights to programs without having exclusive rights to broadcast them. For example, it announced that it had acquired exclusive international rights to 96 episodes of Jim Henson's series *Fraggle Rock*. However, focusing on co-producing of a small number of programs has not been a bad strategy. To do this, the company has enlisted the help of cultural industries stars Oprah Winfrey (and her *Book Club*), Jennifer Aniston, Reese Witherspoon and Steve Carell (producers and lead actors of *The Morning Show*), Spike Jonze (director of *Beastie Boys Story*), and Steven Spielberg (executive producer of the revival of the anthology series *Fantastic Stories*).

Moreover, standing out seems to have already succeeded in ensuring the success of the platform. In 2021, Self Financial's ranking of the best programs distributed on platforms in the U.S., using IMDb scores, concluded that Apple's was ahead of Netflix, HBO Max, Prime Video, Disney+, and Hulu (Self, 2022). Clearly, Apple is targeting a more specific audience than many of its competitors, starting with Netflix (Power & London, 2020).

As we have seen before, the four firms have realized the importance of controlling activities from upstream to downstream by building up catalogs of rights based on production and co-production, or even exclu-



sive purchases, and by supervising audience practices by designing interfaces that allow them to offer modes of access to content and control them.

#### 4 Whether or not media chronology is respected in the case of film production

In order to go further into the relationships between these “new” intermediation services and old and new practices in the audiovisual sector, it is also interesting to look at the media chronology. Historically, depending on the country, either thanks to a law and regulations (in the case of France), or thanks to self-regulation by the main players in the sector (in the case of Canada), any film production was first broadcast in theaters before being offered on other media (VHS video cassettes and then DVDs, pay-per-view television, specialized television and often, at the end of the day, general television). The order and timing were precise and differed from country to country, depending on the relations of power between the various players in the two audiovisual cinema and television sectors.

As the first platform to start producing original content for online viewing, Netflix has challenged this traditional chronology. It has historically positioned itself against the obligatory passage of a film in a theater (Olsen, 2018), preferring to take advantage of the exclusivity of distribution on the platform, in order to attract more subscriptions (Olsen, 2018). With the creation and rise of this player, audiovisual products are no longer linked simultaneously to a single screen, but to a multiplicity of viewing practices on different terminals (computer, tablet, multifunctional phone, and even television). The company has even been known to offer its feature film co-productions on its platform rather than in theaters (Olsen, 2018). This choice caused quite a problem at the 2019 Cannes Film Festival (Bernard, 2019). More recently, Netflix has softened its stance by making exceptions for some of its (co)creations, including *Roma* (Lussier, 2019). This film, which won three Oscars, for Best Director, Best Foreign Language Film, and Best Cinematography, re-

ceived a theatrical release, albeit a very limited one (Lussier, 2019).

On the contrary, Amazon’s management has generally chosen to respect the first window of distribution for the cinema, i.e., the cinema screening in theaters. It prides itself on adopting a “case-by-case” approach, depending on the films it distributes: Thus, while it has taken advantage of the craze surrounding certain films in festivals such as *The Wife* (Björn Runge) or *The Old Man and the Gun* (David Lowery) by making them available directly on Prime Video, the film *Cold War* (Pawel Pawlikowski) benefited from a theatrical presence before being put online on the platform (Lesniak, 2019). It appears once again that Amazon generally seeks to integrate its activities within the film industry without challenging it, at least in this respect. The same applies to Disney+ and Apple TV+. In this regard, the Cupertino firm has confirmed that films shown exclusively on its platform would be in theaters so that they would be eligible for the various awards (Gramuglia, 2019). In July 2020, Apple TV+ even became the first online viewing platform to win a Daytime Emmy Award less than a year after its release for its productions *Ghostwriter* and *Peanuts in Space: Secret of Apollo 10* (Apple Inc., 2020). In doing so, it is behaving more like traditional broadcasters of film productions than Netflix, which has instead tried to change the rules of the game in this area.

#### 5 Change or no change in the media coverage of TV series

And what about the online availability of television series, which are now emblematic of television as a medium? Once again, Netflix has tried to change the uses of serial creations by favorizing the trend of binge-watching – watching several episodes at the same moment – with the “continue watching” box at the end of each episode (Mota Drumond, 2016, p. 73). This practice encourages the consumption of content on such a platform by creating a virtuous circle in its favor as Jenner puts it: “[S]upposedly ‘binge-able’ texts also legitimise the viewing practice, and thus the medium: if viewers stand to earn val-

ued cultural capital, it is socially acceptable to binge, rather than watch several hours of scheduled television” (as cited in Wayne, 2018, p. 730). The trend thus feeds the platform, which in turn feeds the trend.

However, this practice is not completely new either. Traditional television channels could already broadcast several episodes of a series in a row. However, they were still limited to a programming schedule whose time slots could be commandeered in advance by other content produced for the channel. In addition, it was possible to practice burst listening by purchasing the DVD box set of the season of a series to watch the episodes one after the other. But it was necessary to wait until the end of the programming of these seasons on television to obtain the DVD box set of the complete season. Therefore, while streaming is not completely new, Netflix has allowed it to take on a new dimension. This form of mediatization of serial audiovisual content refers to what its management at the Los Gatos firm calls “winning moments of truth,” the moments of free time that consumers give to watching content on its platform (Netflix, 2019, p. 1–2). This new mode of burst viewing is a trend to watch as it is not just a downstream change in the industry. It is also likely to influence scriptwriters in the way they write creations, as is the fact that platforms do not cut series with commercial breaks unlike traditional TV channels, especially private ones. The result is a tendency “to side-step recaps, cliff-hangers, and similar narrative devices intended to keep viewers glued between commercial breaks and from one week to the next” (Hallinan & Striplas, 2016, p. 129).

Nevertheless, this type of practice used by Netflix has not necessarily been followed by the other major players (Jenner, 2018). For example, Apple’s management has decided to release one episode per week for some of its series, notably its flagship series *The Morning Show*, *For All Mankind* and *See* (Dumas, 2020). It chose to make the first three episodes of each of these series available at the launch of the platform. The remaining episodes were then released individually each week. This strategy aimed to hook the audience during the first week of the free trial and then force them to renew their subscription

in order to find out the outcome of these series. The trend is the same for Disney, which is hardly surprising given that the company is a historical player in the cultural industries. Thus, an emblematic series of this platform, *The Mandalorian*, was made available at the rate of one episode per week, a rather traditional strategy, mainly aimed at boosting subscription retention (Dumas, 2018). This decision to maintain the traditional model is not only related to the choices of a few companies. Indeed, it is possible to wonder whether it does not hide a loss of speed – quite rapid from a historical point of view – of the practice of binge-watching. With the free trial periods, some people took advantage of them to devour the last season of their favorite show and then unsubscribe from the service (Dumas, 2018). In this area, Disney+ no longer offers free trial periods in some countries such as the U.S. and France since the beginning of June 2020 (Gartenberg, 2020). It is also possible to see more and more series releasing their new seasons in two stages (case of *Lupin* and *Stranger Things* on Netflix). Is there no longer a single model?

## 6 Conclusion

It appears that historical professions of the companies to which we have devoted this research play a notable role in the ways in which their platforms contribute to insert themselves into the audiovisual sector and mediate their content. On the one hand, as Perticoz (2019) writes, these firms intend to control the entire sector, i.e., to be fully involved in an industrial logic of functioning in a sector, by implementing a classic strategy of vertical integration from upstream to downstream. Nevertheless, they are developing various modalities according to their historical activities and their modes of valorization. For many years, Netflix has always been perceived as the leading, innovative company in the sector. In fact, Perticoz (2019, p. 338) writes that even well-established companies in the audiovisual sector has to adapt to the new ways of doing things created by Netflix, whose successful model has until now dictated the strategic positioning of its competitors.

We could then think that the traditional model of broadcasting television content was going to be replaced by that of webcasting, which is specific to online distribution platforms (Le Champion, 2019, p. 39). Reed Hastings, chairman of Netflix, has always said that he no longer believed in the traditional television model, where viewers would be “dependent on channels that offer programs at fixed times, visible on a television set.” In contrast, Netflix would offer the “television of the future” (Lauer, 2014). The company describes itself in terms of the opposite characteristics of television: “Members can watch as much as they want, anytime, anywhere, on any internet-connected screen. Members can play, pause and resume watching, all without commercials or commitments” (Netflix, 2019, p. 1). However, in some countries like France, Netflix is now available on a broadcasting model, the viewer being forced to watch selected programs, rather than choosing one and starting to watch it at the most convenient time for him (Campion, 2021). In Canada and U.S., Netflix signed in 2022 a priority distribution deal for one of its main movies with the largest theater owners in North America (Radio-Canada, 2022). The company’s management does not systematically practice “permanent revolution” anymore. Changes are not as linear as it may appear at first sight. Transformations are at work and there is a certain “contamination” of old practices originating from the organization of traditional cinema and television in these new intermediation services.

In these transformations, what is the possible function of the COVID-19 pandemic that has led to several lockdowns in 2020 and 2021 in most countries in the world? Based on research made during the first year, Vlassis (2021) concludes that global online platforms (Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+, Apple TV+, or HBO Max) have strengthened their position, which generated an unprecedented change in the production, dissemination, and consumption of audiovisual content. Logically, Netflix benefited from this situation to increase its number of subscribers in 2020 and 2021. At the end of 2019, the platform included 167 million subscribers worldwide while two years later the

number had increased to 221 million (Bazoge, 2022).

But the long-term effects of the pandemic on the development of the industry remain unclear according to the Federation of European Screen Directors (2020) while the Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions concludes to the rise of the platform as the dominant infrastructural and economic model in the industry. The pandemic context could even favorize concentration dynamics in the audiovisual market due to the action of global streaming platforms (Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, 2021). In fact, we could hope that COVID-19 situation is only conjunctural while changes are more structural. Beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, growth of platforms is more and more present in a world increasingly marked by digitalization (George, 2020a, 2020b). But data need to be analyzed with caution and on a long-term scale. In the first half of 2022, the emphasis was made on the decline of subscribers (1.2 million) for Netflix but there was a further increase in the second half of the same year (Bazoge, 2022). The two years of COVID-19 pandemic have also been characterized by an increase of viewing traditional television (Séгур, 2020). In the struggle between “old” and “new” media Lotz (2021, p. 145) estimates that linear television will prioritize “ephemeral” programs for simultaneous viewing, to be able to compete with the offer of streaming platforms. However, this kind of program is also now available on digital platforms, starting of course with DAZN, specialized in the broadcasting of sports events (Lupien & George, in press).

In this paper, emphasis was placed both on changes and continuities to challenge the idea of a break between a possible pre-Netflix era and a possible post-Netflix era. In order to do this, several dimensions were emphasized while others were discarded. For instance, if the growing production for audiovisual content was underlined, focus was not on consequences of the emergence of new professional practices and new professions (Baldacchino, 2019). We did not study conditions of work, for instance, the case of pro-



professionals who need to work more and more, often 15 hours a day with constant pressure to speed up work and little time for breaks (Bloom, 2021).

Nor was there any emphasis on the role of subscribers in ongoing continuities and changes, such as the consequences of their uses of platforms on firms' decisions. If some exclusive popular titles can generate subscriptions, loyalty to the services can be mainly explained by the size of catalogs and the functionalities of devices (organization and presentation of the catalog, possibility of downloading, availability of subtitles, perceived qualities of recommendations, etc.). Ellis (2000) develops the concept of "choice fatigue" which tends to favorize the domination of the market by a small number of international platforms, such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+ (Dessinges & Perticoz, 2019). "The old media persistence" manifests itself not only in the choices made by platform managers but also in cultural practices developed by users, for instance when they re-create at home traditional conditions of viewing television even with digital platforms (Combes & Glevarec, 2021).

In conclusion, all studies, including ours, have several limits. Those analyzing audiovisual transformations most often choose to work separately on modalities of production, analysis of audiovisual content, or reception, which limits the global ability to capture how all these activities fit on a continuum or contribute to major changes (Mittell, 2015). But ours seems to be useful by trying to take into account long term analysis (George & Sénécal, 2017) in order to work on the theme of this Thematic Section.

### Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the colleagues who reviewed and contributed to this paper.

### Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

### References

- Apple Inc. (2020). Apple TV+. *apple.com*. Retrieved from <https://www.apple.com/>
- Baldacchino, J. (2019). Netflix, l'usine à séries que le cinéma déteste adorer [Netflix, the series factory that cinema hates to adore]. *Nectart*, 9, 116–125.
- Barthes, S. (2018, May). De quoi la série originale Netflix (Netflix Original) est-elle le nom? Quelques jalons sur l'histoire de Netflix [What is the Netflix original series about? A few milestones in the history of Netflix]. *Numerisation généralisée de la société*, CRICIS, Montréal, Canada. Retrieved from <https://shs.hal.science/halshs-02097155>
- Bazoge, M. (2022). Netflix retrouve ses abonnés perdus mais va quand même chasser le partage de compte début 2023 [Netflix finds its lost subscribers but will still hunt account sharing in early 2023]. *iGeneration*. Retrieved from <https://www.igen.fr/services/2022/10/netflix-retrouve-ses-abonnes-perdus-mais-va-quand-meme-chasser-le-partage-de-comptes-debut-2023-133141>
- Bélanger, P. C., & Lafontaine-Beaumier, É. (2015). Le nouveau cycle de mutation de la télévision [The new cycle of change in television]. *Gestion*, 4(40), 68–71.
- Benhamou, F., & Farchy, J. (2014). *Droit d'auteur et copyright* [Copyright] (3rd ed.). Paris, France: La Découverte.
- Benkler, Y. (2006). *The wealth of networks: How social production transforms markets and freedom*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Bernard, A. (2019, February 1). Netflix à Cannes, saison 3: la pression s'accroît sur le festival [Netflix in Cannes, season 3: The pressure is increasing on the festival]. *Le Figaro*. Retrieved from <http://www.lefigaro.fr/festival-de-cannes/2019/02/01/03011-20190201ARTFIG00142-netflix-a-cannes-saison-3-la-pression-augmente-sur-le-festival.php>
- Bloom, D. (2021, September 23). Is the streaming revolution about to get hit with a major production work stoppage? *Next TV*. Retrieved from <https://www.nexttv.com/news/is-hollywood-headed-toward-a-talent-reset-or-a-mutiny>
- Bouquillion, P. (2008). *Les industries de la culture et de la communication : les stratégies du capitalisme* [The cultural and communica-

- tion industries: The strategies of capitalism]. Grenoble, France: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble.
- Bourreau, M., Maillard, S., & Moreau, F. (2015). Une analyse économique du phénomène de la longue traîne dans les industries culturelles [An economic analysis of the long tail phenomenon in the cultural industries]. *Revue française d'économie*, 30(2), 179–216.
- Campion, B. (2021). Quand une plateforme prétend inventer la télévision d'hier: "Direct" de Netflix [When a platform claims to invent yesterday's television: Netflix's "Direct"]. *Effeuillage*, 1(10), 50–53. Retrieved from <https://www.cairn.info/revue-effeuillage-2021-1-page-50.htm&wt.src=pdf>
- Claus, S. (2017). Le débat sur la mondialisation culturelle à l'heure du "numérique": le cas de Netflix au Canada et au Québec [The debate on cultural globalization in the "digital" era: The case of Netflix in Canada and Quebec]. *COMMPosite*, 19(2), 4–36. Retrieved from <http://www.composite.org/index.php/revue/article/view/257>
- Combes C., & Glevarec, H. (2021). Enquête sur les pratiques et les goûts des Français pour les séries télévisées [Survey on French practices and tastes for television series]. Paris, France: Presses des Mines.
- Desjardins, D. (2018). À la conquête des téléspectateurs canadiens: la télé en ligne contre la télé traditionnelle [Conquering Canadian viewers: Online TV vs. traditional TV]. *FMC Veille*. Retrieved from <https://cmf-fmc.ca/fr/futur-et-medias/articles/a-la-conquete-des-tele spectateurs-canadiens-la-tele-en-ligne-contre-la-tele-traditionnelle/>
- Dessinges, C., & Perticoz, L. (2019). Les consommations de séries télévisées des publics étudiants face à Netflix: une autonomie en question [Consumption of television series by students and Netflix: Autonomy in question]. *Les Enjeux de l'information et de la communication*, 201(1), 5–23.
- Dumas, H. (2018, October 30). La télé en ligne monte en flèche [Online TV is skyrocketing]. *La Presse+*. Retrieved from [http://plus.lapresse.ca/screens/55717c95-124d-4b98-975a-500023e32455\\_\\_7C\\_0.html](http://plus.lapresse.ca/screens/55717c95-124d-4b98-975a-500023e32455__7C_0.html)
- Dumas, H. (2020, February 8). La fin du buffet télévisuel [The end of the television buffet]. *La Presse+*. Retrieved from [https://plus.lapresse.ca/screens/d2cc5506-c490-44ae-b2b9-89e1591e6918%7C\\_0.html](https://plus.lapresse.ca/screens/d2cc5506-c490-44ae-b2b9-89e1591e6918%7C_0.html)
- Ellis, J. (2000). *Seeing things. Television in the age of uncertainty*. London, UK: I. B. Tauris. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9780755604784>
- Evans, D. S., & Schmalensee, R. (2016). *Matchmakers: The new economics of multisided platforms*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Review Press.
- Federation of European Screen Directors. (2020). Film and audiovisual sector COVID-19 statement by over 115 organisations. *FERA*. Retrieved from <https://screendirectors.eu/joint-film-and-audiovisual-sector-covid-19-statement-7-april-2020/>
- Forbes (2021, May 30). Pourquoi Amazon a décidé d'investir davantage pour racheter la MGM que Disney pour Star Wars et Marvel [Why Amazon decided to invest more to buy MGM than Disney for Star Wars and Marvel]. *Forbes France*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.fr/business/pourquoi-amazon-a-decide-dinvestir-davantage-pour-racheter-la-mgm-que-disney-pour-star-wars-et-marvel/>
- Fuchs, C. (2017). *Social Media: A Critical Introduction* (2nd ed.). London, UK: Sage.
- Gartenberg, C. (2020, June 19). Disney Plus no longer offers free trials, just before Hamilton release. *The Verge*. Retrieved from <https://www.theverge.com/2020/6/19/21296717/disney-plus-no-free-trial-streaming-hamilton-release-monthly-subscription#:~:text=Without%20a%20free%20trial%2C%20anyone,will%20turn%20into%20long%20term>
- George, É. (2018). La médiatisation du football / soccer à la télévision: Éléments issus d'une démarche contrastive France / Canada [Soccer TV Coverage: Elements from a contrastive approach France / Canada]. *Communiquer*, 22, 11–28. <https://doi.org/10.4000/communiquer.2464>
- George, É. (Ed.). (2020a). *Digitalization of society and socio-political issues. Volume 1: Digital, culture and communication*. London, UK: Wiley.
- George, É. (Ed.). (2020b). *Digitalization of society and socio-political issues. Volume 2: Digital, information and research*. London, UK: Wiley.
- George, É., & Sénécal, M. (2017). L'importance de la "longue durée" dans les études en communication à partir de l'analyse des industries culturelles [The importance of "the long

- term” in communication studies based on the analysis of cultural industries]. In J.-C. Domenget, N. Pélissier, & B. Miège (Eds.), *Temps et temporalités en information-communication : des concepts aux méthodes* (pp. 45–60). Paris, France: L’Harmattan.
- Gramuglia, A. (2019, October 27). Can the glut of new streaming services legitimately challenge Netflix? *cbr.com*. Retrieved from <https://www.cbr.com/streaming-services-challenge-netflix/>
- Hallinan, B., & Striphas, T. (2016). Recommended for you: The Netflix Prize and the production of algorithmic culture. *New Media & Society*, 18(1), 117–137. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1461444814538646>
- Jenkins, H. (2008). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Jenner, M. (2018). *Netflix and the re-invention of television*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-94316-9>
- Katz, B. (2018, February 27). “Stranger Things” is the most popular streaming show in the world. *Observer*. Retrieved from <https://observer.com/2018/02/stranger-things-ratings-netflix-amazon-video-hulu-details/>
- Latournerie, A. (2001). Petite histoire des batailles du droit d’auteur [A short history of copyright battles]. *Multitudes*, 2(5), 37–62.
- Lauer, S. (2014, September 13). Avec Netflix, la “télévision du futur” arrive en France [With Netflix, the “television of the future” arrives in France]. *Le Monde*. Retrieved from [https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2014/09/13/netflix-que-le-carnage-commence\\_4487006\\_3234.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2014/09/13/netflix-que-le-carnage-commence_4487006_3234.html)
- Le Champion, R. (2019). La Télévision entre deux paradigmes [Television between two paradigms]. *Télévision*, 1(10), 33–51.
- Lesniak, I. (2019). Le festival de Cannes face à la déferlante du streaming [The Cannes Film Festival faces the flood of streaming]. *Les Échos*, May 9, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.lesechos.fr/tech-medias/medias/cannes-et-la-deferlante-du-streaming-1017175>
- Levy, A. (2018, February 14). The 3 countries where Amazon Prime Video is beating Netflix. *The Motley Fool*. Retrieved from <https://www.fool.com/investing/2018/02/14/the-3-countries-where-amazon-prime-video-is-beating-netflix.aspx>
- Lotz, A. D. (2021). *Media disrupted. Surviving pirates, cannibals, and streaming wars*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Lupien, P.-A., & George, É. (in press). DAZN, “nouvelle fenêtre” du sport télévisé: entre innovation et reproduction [DAZN, the “new window” of televised sport: Between innovation and reproduction]. *Kinephanos*.
- Lussier, M.-A. (2019, February 1). Roma, maintenant à l’affiche dans quatre salles! [Roma, now playing in four theaters!]. *La Presse*. Retrieved from <https://www.lapresse.ca/cinema/nouvelles/201902/01/01-5213207-roma-maintenant-a-laffiche-dans-quatre-salles.php>
- McIntyre, D. P., & Srinivasan, A. (2017). Networks, platforms, and strategy: Emerging views and next steps. *Strategic Management Journal*, 38(1), 141–160.
- Ménard, M. (2004). *Éléments pour une économie des industries culturelles* [Elements for a cultural industries economy]. Montréal, Canada: SODEC.
- Ménard, M. (2014). The concept of the industrial channel in the domain of culture, information and communication: A French specialty? *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 39(1), 73–88. <https://doi.org/10.22230/cjc.2014v39n1a2677>
- Miège, B. (2017). *Les industries culturelles et créatives face à l’ordre de l’information et de la communication* [The cultural and creative industries facing the order of information and communication]. Grenoble, France: Presses universitaires de Grenoble.
- Mittell, J. (2015). *Complex TV. The poetics of contemporary television storytelling*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Mota Drummond, G. S. (2016). *La configuration des usages sur Netflix: le système de recommandation cinematch et la représentation de l’usager* [The configuration of uses on Netflix: the cinematch recommendation system and the representation of the user]. Mémoire de Maîtrise. Montréal, Canada: Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM).
- Mœglin, P. (2005). *Outils et médias éducatifs. Une approche communicationnelle* [Educational tools and media. A communication approach]. Grenoble, France: Presses universitaires de Grenoble.

- Netflix. (2019). *Annual Report 2018*. Los Gatos, CA. Retrieved from [https://s22.q4cdn.com/959853165/files/doc\\_financials/annual\\_reports/2018/Form-10K\\_Q418\\_Filed.pdf](https://s22.q4cdn.com/959853165/files/doc_financials/annual_reports/2018/Form-10K_Q418_Filed.pdf)
- Olsen, M. (2018, January 18). No longer disruptors, Netflix and Amazon are now firmly in the Sundance Film Festival family. *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/la-et-mn-sundance-netflix-amazon-20180118-story.html>
- Perticoz, L. (2019). Filière de l'audiovisuel et plateformes SVOD : une analyse croisée des stratégies de Disney et Netflix [Audiovisual sector and SVOD platforms: a cross-analysis of the strategies of Disney and Netflix]. *tic&société*, 13(1-2), 323-353.
- Poirier, P. J. (2019). Streaming wars. La nostalgie comme arme de conquête [Nostalgia as a weapon of conquest]. *FMC*. Retrieved from <https://cmf-fmc.ca/fr/futur-et-medias/articles/streaming-wars-la-nostalgie-comme-arme-de-conquete/>
- Power, E., & London, L. (2020, September 6). Best streaming service: Disney Plus, Netflix, Apple TV+, now TV and Amazon Prime compared. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/on-demand/0/best-streaming-apps-netflix-apple-disney-plus-amazon-prime/>
- Radio-Canada. (2019, June 26). The Office ne sera plus offerte sur Netflix à partir de janvier 2021 [The Office will no longer be offered on Netflix from January 2021]. *Radio-Canada*. Retrieved from <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1199693/the-office-quitte-netflix-janvier-2021>
- Radio-Canada (2022, October 7). Alliance inédite entre Netflix et des salles de cinéma au Canada et aux Etats-Unis [Unprecedented alliance between Netflix and movie theaters in Canada and the United States]. *Radio-Canada*. Retrieved from <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1923356/alliance-netflix-canada-etats-unis-film-couteaux-tires>
- Rimaud, M. (2019). Amazon est-il le nouveau géant de la culture et du divertissement? [Is Amazon the new culture and entertainment giant?]. *Nectart*, 8(1), 67-76.
- Séguir, C. (2020, May 24). Télévision et confinement : la permanence d'un média social [Television and confinement: the permanence of social media]. *The Conversation*. Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com/television-et-confinement-la-permanence-dun-media-social-138906>
- Self. (2022). Which TV streaming service is the best value for money? Retrieved from <https://www.self.inc/info/which-tv-streaming-service-best-value-for-money/>
- Striphas, T. (2015). Algorithmic culture. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 18(4-5), 395-412. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549415577392>
- Van Dijck, J. (2013). *The culture of connectivity: A critical history of social media*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Vlassis, A. (2021). Global online platforms, COVID-19, and culture: The global pandemic, an accelerator towards which direction? *Media Culture and Society*, 43(5), 957-969. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443721994537>
- Wayne, M. L. (2018). Netflix, Amazon, and branded television content in subscription video on-demand portals. *Media, Culture & Society*, 40(5), 725-741. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443717736118>
- Winseck, D. R., & Jin, D. Y. (Eds.). (2011). *The political economies of media: The transformation of the global media industries*. London, UK: Bloomsbury.