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**Policy Experiments in Public Service Media**

Experiments are part of the methodological toolkit in empirical political, economic and social science research. In political communication, for instance, there is considerable interest in empirical investigation of cause and effect in relation to voter turnout. In telecommunications policy, to give another example, experiments are used to determine which modus operandi of a spectrum auction yields the highest bids. However, perhaps surprisingly, there is very little elaboration on the use and potential of experiments for media and communications policy, an issue addressed in this paper. The article starts out by introducing some basic features of experiments and experimental approaches. Subsequently, five models or forms of broadcasting organization that differ in their level of market proximity are introduced. Building upon these models, the paper develops one suggestion of where an experiment could be used and how it could be designed. The concept starts from the hypothesis that public accountability of the German PSM organizations ARD and ZDF can be increased when licence-fee contributors have ex ante control over programme-making decisions. This would involve allocating a small proportion of German licence-fee funds, over a predetermined period, to a newly-designed participatory and transparent programme-making scheme. Given ARD and ZDF’s reluctance towards radical change, the scheme might best be applied in one of ARD’s niche channels. Eventually the experiment it could test whether such policy measures are deemed right to increase accountability in public service media organizations.

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