Critical Books Review

Technology As A System

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Bosch has published a manual by Iñaki Zabaleta entitled *Tecnología de la información audiovisual (Technology of Audiovisual Information)* in the same collection that has featured classic works by Raymond Williams and Jensen & Jankowski. Zabaleta's ambitious work reviews cable, satellite and terrestrial radio and television, internet and analogue and digital telephone systems and services. In this 650-page work of a certain encyclopaedic vocation, Zabaleta rejects the technological euphoria and determinism that he believes is part of the information society, and even of Castells' network society, in favour of a logic that breaks the link between technology and culture.

However, it is clear that a work of this type (which goes beyond theoretical bases to review techniques, networks, systems, the industry and its regulation and related production technology) cannot but have an important technology-based approach. Iñaki Zabaleta, a professor with the Department of Journalism at the University of the Basque Country and a documentary and television-news director, has called on physics and engineering to make all the parts form an immaculate basis.

However, it is reassuring that he also reviews the techno-logical failures: exquisite cadavers like videotext, now so long forgotten it belongs to the field of archaeology, but which enjoyed a very brief moment in the 1980s. With the analogue switch-off almost upon us, the review of these failures and of the workings of analogue systems positions the book somewhere between the history, structure and technology of the audiovisual media. It is in the context of the move to digital terrestrial television (DTT) that the detail he uses to explain concepts like 'convergence', 'penetration' and 'bandwidth extension' are helpful to anybody in some way or another linked to the world of communication.

From the methodological viewpoint, Zabaleta organises the book on the basis of the systems theory and applies the comparatist method in analysing the delay in the implementation of DTT and to compare the European and US systems. This helps our understanding, as does the glossary for moving within the magma of acronyms of the institutions, companies, systems, technology and laws related to the audiovisual world. All up, the book is a useful guide in the field of futurology and the teaching of the structure of communication and technology in this macrosector.