

From Public Service Broadcasting to Public Service Media

Gregory Ferrell Lowe
& Jo Bardoel (eds.)

RIPE@2007

NORDICOM

From Public Service Broadcasting to Public Service Media

From Public Service Broadcasting to Public Service Media

**Gregory Ferrell Lowe
& Jo Bardoel (eds.)**

NORDICOM

From Public Service Broadcasting to Public Service Media RIPE@2007

Gregory Ferrell Lowe & Jo Bardoel (eds.)

© Editorial matters and selections, the editors; articles, individual contributors; Nordicom

ISBN 978-91-89471-53-5

Published by:
Nordicom
Göteborg University
Box 713
SE 405 30 GÖTEBORG
Sweden

Cover by: Roger Palmqvist
Cover photo by: Arja Lento
Printed by: Livréna AB, Kungälv, Sweden, 2007
Environmental certification according to ISO 14001

Contents

Preface	7
<i>Jo Bardoel and Gregory Ferrell Lowe</i> From Public Service Broadcasting to Public Service Media. The Core Challenge	9
PSM PLATFORMS: POLICY & STRATEGY	
<i>Karol Jakubowicz</i> Public Service Broadcasting in the 21 st Century. What Chance for a New Beginning?	29
<i>Hallvard Moe</i> Commercial Services, Enclosure and Legitimacy. Comparing Contexts and Strategies for PSM Funding and Development	51
<i>Andra Leurdijk</i> Public Service Media Dilemmas and Regulation in a Converging Media Landscape	71
<i>Steven Barnett</i> Can the Public Service Broadcaster Survive? Renewal and Compromise in the New BBC Charter	87
<i>Richard van der Wurff</i> Focus on Audiences. Public Service Media in the Market Place	105
<i>Teemu Palokangas</i> The Public Service Entertainment Mission. From Historic Periphery to Contemporary Core	119
PSM PROGRAMMES: STRATEGY & TACTICS	
<i>Yngvar Kjus</i> Ideals and Complications in Audience Participation for PSM. Open Up or Hold Back?	135

<i>Brian McNair</i> Current Affairs in British Public Service Broadcasting. Challenges and Opportunities	151
<i>Irene Costera Meijer</i> 'Checking, Snacking and Bodysnatching'. How Young People Use the News and Implications for Public Service Media Journalism	167
<i>Hanne Bruun</i> Satire as Cross-Media Entertainment for Public Service Media	187
<i>Mirko Lukács</i> Education in the Transition to Public Service Media	199
<i>Philip Savage</i> The Audience Massage. Audience Research and Canadian Public Service Broadcasting	215
THE ROOTS OF PSM	
<i>Slavko Splichal</i> Does History Matter? Grasping the Idea of Public Service Media at Its Roots	237
Author Biographies	257

Preface

This book is the culmination of papers, presentations and discussion in the RIPE@2006 conference which took place in Amsterdam and Hilversum (proceedings available at: www.yle.fi/ripe). This third RIPE conference continued to strengthen and enrich collaborative work between media intellectuals concerned with the public interest in electronic media today and senior managers involved with the development of the public service enterprise. Conference substance was keyed to the transition from public service broadcasting to public service media as summarised in the title of this third volume in the RIPE book series published by Nordicom, the Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research at the Göteborg University in Sweden. The topic is of considerable theoretical, operational and policy importance today, and we trust that readers will find the substance stimulating and useful in each of these three interdependent arenas.

RIPE@2006 was organised jointly by Netherlands Public Broadcasting (Nederlandse Publieke Omroep, NPO) and the Amsterdam School of Communications Research (ASCoR) at the University of Amsterdam. The organisers and participants sincerely appreciate the funding and participation from the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Dutch Media Authority, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), and the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision.

Conference planning was handled by the Conference Planning Group. We especially thank these colleagues for their work and their host institutions for the support required for their involvement: Julia Hoffmann, Lisa Linde Nieveld, Margriet Smit and Sandra Zwier (ASCoR), Louis Heinsman and Ineke Woudenberg (NPO), and Per Jauert (University of Aarhus, Denmark). We also thank YLE Strategy & Development for the support that enabled Lowe's involvement. The planning group benefited from input provided by the 2006 RIPE Advisory Associates: Leen d'Haenens (Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium and Radboud University Nijmegen, Netherlands), Christina Holtz-Bacha (Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany), Taisto Hujanen (University of Tampere, Finland), Karol Jakubowicz (Steering Committee on the Media and New Communication

PREFACE

Services, Council of Europe), and Jeanette Steemers (University of Westminster, UK). Warm thanks as well to John Jackson, Professor Emeritus at Concordia University in Canada.

The editors want to especially thank the authors for a productive editorial process. We are grateful for your patience and appreciate the obvious commitment to achieving excellence.

We are pleased to announce that the RIPE@2008 conference will take place in Mainz, Germany in autumn 2008. It will be co-sponsored by ZDF (Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen) and the programme in Medienintelligenz at the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz.

Helsinki and Amsterdam in November, 2007

Gregory Ferrell Lowe

Jo Bardoel

From Public Service Broadcasting to Public Service Media

The Core Challenge

Jo Bardoel and Gregory Ferrell Lowe

The core challenge facing public service broadcasting [PSB] today is the transition to public service media [PSM]. This was clear in the discourse of scholars, practitioners and policy makers participating in the RIPE@2006 conference in the Netherlands. The contributors in this volume address crucial dimensions of that core challenge.

A key dimension is the necessity of moving beyond the transmission model that has deeply conditioned professional thought in broadcasting. In the multimedia, digitized environment public service providers must mature a character of thought that privileges being effective public service communicators. That requires demand-oriented approaches to service and content provision rather than the supply-orientation characteristic of the past. It also implies the pivotal importance of securing relations wherein audiences are partners rather than targets. Other dimensions that logically follow on include developing strategy and tactics for cross-media and cross-genre content that is popular but still distinctive when compared with the commercial offer, and ensuring efficiency and effectiveness as the twin requirements for success. For policy makers the core challenge strongly implies fairly balancing the frequently contrary interests of commerce and culture, which is a defining tension at European and domestic levels.

Throughout this book argumentation is keyed to renewing the public service ethos and revitalising the public service mission for a multimedia and polymedia environment.¹ That is vital for successful development of the public service enterprise in strategy and practice. This theme is fully in line with emphasis characterising previous RIPE volumes (Lowe & Jauert, 2005; Lowe & Hujanen, 2003). This third volume deepens critical thinking about theoretical, strategic and operational aspects incumbent in the transition to PSM.²

This book is organised into two sections plus introductory and concluding chapters. Chapters two through seven comprise the first section which is about dynamics, complications and challenges incumbent in policy development and strategy elaboration for the transition to PSM. In chapters eight through fourteen, comprising section two, contributions focus on programmatic and

content-related aspects. These are equally essential in the strategic realm and importantly tighten attention on tactical implications. The concluding chapter returns our focus to the conceptual roots for PSM, of obvious importance for revitalising the public service ethos.

In this introductory chapter we establish a context, beginning with an overview of EU media policy to understand why and how the commerce versus culture tension is of fundamental importance (d'Haenens & Bardoel, 2007). We then favour the social shaping of technology as a governing perspective and next consider convergence as the essential driver. A central theme hinges on the keen necessity for conceptual development to facilitate success in becoming public service focussed on forging a *partnership* with audience as active agents. We conclude with discussion about implications for content.

EU media policy: PSB from the centre to an exception?

Van Cuilenburg and McQuail (2003) identified three phases in European media policy, framed as paradigms: 1) emerging communications industry policy in the period before the Second World War, 2) public service media policy after the War until the 1980s, and 3) new communications policy since the end of PSB monopolies. In this third phase the policy paradigm features technological and economic convergence, socio-cultural values that privilege market-based solutions, pragmatism and populism as policy drivers, and the process of globalization which relaxes national boundaries. Although much in the dynamics is new, the issues are remarkably consistent. "In some respects, the history of Phase I has had to be replayed, but against an entirely different background, with new political ideas and social values. Once again there are new and powerful technologies with unclear potential for development, vast commercial and industrial interests at stake and governments struggling to keep abreast of change" (ibid: 198). European broadcasting policy highlights social imperatives as the pivotal concern and these are consistently keyed to "a public service remit aimed at protecting moral values, cultural traditions, pluralism and democracy" (Simpson, 2000: 446). The decisive issues have always been primarily *social*. This is not to underplay economic or technological factors; on the contrary, these are understood as components of the social rather than separate spheres.

As Collins (1998a) demonstrated, since 1982 the EU has been hard charging in its drive to achieve a robust marketized practice in electronic media, a process facilitated by the Television Without Frontiers directive (1984 and 1989). But even there one finds significant emphasis on social and cultural objectives, particularly evident in the as yet unrealized hope that a pan-European commercial broadcasting system would create a shared sense of European-ness (ibid; also see Schlesinger, 1993). The Maastricht Treaty (1990) with its paragraph on culture explicitly signalled the simmering tension between economic and cultural principles that "bifurcate" European media policy, to use

the term favoured by van Cuilenburg and McQuail. Since the mid 1980s the public broadcasting hegemony in Europe collapsed with the creation of what has become a unique 'dual system' of competing public service and private commercial broadcasters.³

In the 1990s there were mounting pressures to draft more precise formulations of the tasks and mission which together comprise the PSB remit in this new highly competitive context. According to an inventory by McQuail (1992: 49-64), comparing PSB mission statements reveals recurring themes that comprise a public service ethos: 1) a commitment to universal service; 2) the demand for nurturing diversity and securing a representative character in content in political, social and cultural terms; 3) guaranteeing democratic accountability; 4) the significance of public financing, and 5) adhering to non-profit goals. Kleist and Scheuer (2006) also assessed mission statement attributes and report that these commonly include a duty to be independent, objective, unbiased and to make equitable the provision of services to all regardless of social position or geographic location. The securing of diversity and respect for pluralism are also characteristic. Providing quality news and information, cultivating cultures and supporting democratic process are typical. Regarding policy statements, the emphases of deliberative bodies is well illustrated in the nine mandates for public service broadcasting formulated in the Declaration of Prague (Council of Europe, 1994) and signed by forty countries at the Fourth Council of Europe Ministerial Conference on Mass Media Policy. (For detailed insight about the complexities, conflicts and possibilities in European media policy see the chapter by Jakubowicz; for detailed understanding of the PSB conceptual heritage as it applies to PSM see the chapter by Splichal).

Such analyses signal the decisive importance of social imperatives and indicate a defining tension between culture and commerce. That is nowhere more obvious than in the cornerstone of PSB policy in the European Union, the Protocol on the System of Public Service Broadcasting attached to the Treaty of Amsterdam (CEC Commission of the European Communities, 1997). The Amsterdam Protocol explicitly asserts that public service broadcasting is *directly* related to the democratic, social and cultural needs of European citizens and a *necessity* for maintaining media pluralism. The protocol secures the competence of Member States to provide funding for the fulfilment of the public service remit as conferred, defined and organised by each Member State, while such funding cannot adversely affect trading conditions and competition in the Community to an extent which would be contrary to the common interest. This compromise encapsulates the struggle to balance cultural and economic interests (for detailed treatment and from an internal PSB perspective see Lowe & Hujanen, 2007).

Later in the Communication on the Application of State Aid rules (CEC Commission of the European Communities, 2001), the European Commission stipulated that the public service mandate should be precise. It should be clear that a certain activity is specifically entrusted to a designated public service provider, and thus explicitly included in their remit. Transparency and

oversight must be ensured, as well. Later yet, the Green Paper on services of a general economic interest (from May 2003) condoned the enrichment of public debate as an essential service that can also be handled with online services on condition that they cater to democratic, social and cultural needs. The EU Commission now takes decisions on whether an activity is proper on the basis of the following criteria: 1) Is there a clear and precise definition and proper entrustment of the public service mission, especially regarding new media activities? 2) Is there an appropriate and transparent separation of commercial and public service activities? 3) Is there proportional financing of PSB activities that avoids overcompensation and cross-subsidisation?

Consequent to this line of policy development, PSBs have been reformulating mission statements to adapt. Reformulation increasingly features a platform-neutral approach with the goal of bringing content to the public wherever it is and however it prefers (Nissen, 2006a). Most national governments in Europe are so far allowing PSB companies to develop services in the digital domain, but the scale, scope and financing vary, especially when compared with purview in radio and television broadcasting. In general, the main conditions are that new services must contribute to the fulfilment of PSB goals and must be related to the core activities in traditional broadcasting (i.e. they cannot cannibalise on the core task). In the new BBC Charter, for example, digital activities are explicitly endorsed in their remit. But the culture versus commerce tension is quite evident in requirements that every service must be assessed by a 'public value test' that 1) confirms its contribution to the public interest and 2) assesses its impact on the commercial market (see the chapter by Barnett for nuanced analysis). The British approach is likely to be adapted elsewhere.

This culture versus commerce divide is the most characteristic tension in the debate about PSB, and especially in the context of deliberations about the transition to PSM. For the media system at large in a market-based and profit-driven ecology it makes sense to focus regulatory concern on commerce. But it makes little sense to impose that focus on non-profit public service media with their legally encoded and operationally incumbent emphasis on serving the democratic, social and cultural needs of societies. The question is how the European Commission can so blithely treat PSB from a deterministically economic perspective when the entire enterprise isn't about that and is in fact explicitly about the countervailing importance of the socio-cultural dimension. (For excavation of dilemmas related to all of this see the chapter by Leurdijk). How can PSB be treated as an 'exception' when it is so obviously central to the European media ecology and a European invention that remains a cultural institution that greatly contributes to the heritage and richness of European social life?

It can only be treated as an exception when policy perspective lacks a clear understanding of the social shaping of technology and media because the view is constrained by economic and technological determinism.

Social shaping of technology and the evolution of PSB

The idea that technology drives its own development has rightly been rejected as crude technological determinism. Similarly, economic determinism is untenable because economic relations are social phenomena with contested normative emphases (the chapter by Spichal is convincing here). In fact, there is no single factor or force driving media technology and development. Rather, there is a complex of factors that consistently demonstrate the “social shaping of technology” (MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1999). Drivers obviously include economic and technological factors, but also political (e.g., military) interests which are especially characteristic in the history of media technology (Winston, 1998). Radio, satellites, computers and the Internet all began as military technologies, for example. It is also quite evident that cultural factors are powerful determinants when considering comparative differences in how electronic media are situated in the USA and Europe, and when analysing the normative values of neo-liberal philosophy (Barber, 2002; AITEC, 2000). The three paradigms of European media policy discussed earlier further highlight the deterministic influence of *social values*.

Of course earlier technology steers the development of contemporary technology, but even there it does so primarily as the continuing effects of earlier social choices:

Early adoptions, achieved for whatever reason, can be built into what may become irreversible superiority over rivals because success tends to breed success and rejection can turn into neglect and therefore permanent inferiority. The history of technology is a path-dependent history, one in which past events exercise continuing influences... [Thus], path-dependence means that local, short-term contingencies can exercise lasting effects (MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1999: 19-20).

The way any media system is organised and the objectives for which it is responsible are determined by normative values. As McQuail (2005) suggests in his seminal work on mass communication theory, there are at least six normative media theories. Two of the most pervasive are at the heart of the commerce/culture tension: the American libertarian approach and the European social responsibility approach. To a significant extent these are contrasting approaches because they prioritise different societal objectives keyed mainly to contradictory emphasis on advancing private and individual interests (keenly American) versus nurturing public and social interests (more characteristically European).

Thus, the policies shaping technology and media are value-laden and each application is a socially-driven process. “It is mistaken to think of technology and society as separate spheres influencing each other [because] technology and society are mutually constitutive” (MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1999: 23). In Winston’s (1998) analysis social imperatives are similarly primary in determining what is ‘invented’ and diffused because that happens is a function of two

essential drivers – “supervening social necessity”, which fuels the route of development, and the “law of suppression” which constrains possibilities. In both aspects system properties and social dynamics are catalytic.

Any idea that what is happening in today’s media ecology is beyond our capacity to shape because economic or technological factors are in control (or actually out of control) is impossible to accept when social history and media analysis so clearly demonstrate that *outcomes are primarily shaped by social values and cultural imperatives*.

Of course the social shaping of public service broadcasting has been institutionalised in different ways (Jarren et al., 2001: 49). One would expect that to be the case as the remit is directly keyed to the democratic, social and cultural needs of each society. There is no uniform template for how public broadcasting is constructed because socio-cultural context varies. It isn’t surprising to find considerable difference in the degrees to which PSB development in new media is supported, restricted, or even mentioned at all in policy legislation (Kleist & Scheuer, 2006; Picard, 2006). The uneven nature of how this is so far handled (and neglected) indicates the complexity and uncertainty that characterise media-society dynamics at this early stage in the transition. Much of the complexity is keyed to dimensions of convergence, and to the increasingly market-based complexion of the European media ecology associated with that.

Convergence and the PSM ethos

For political, economic and populist reasons, PSM must legitimate itself more explicitly than was the historic case for PSB. It must do so according to market-based sensibilities because marketization is the governing context. These sensibilities privilege the ability to produce ‘positive externalities’, to compensate for ‘market failure’ and to produce evident ‘public value’. This implies rethinking the public service mission for a social context that requires connecting with citizens as users and producers under postmodern conditions in which economic and competition interests are very powerful. To be clear, we are not arguing against their importance – we are arguing for a policy understanding that is not confined to that.

The demand to renew the PSB mission premise first became pressing after the Amsterdam Protocol and then urgent after the Communication on State Aid (2001). This period coincides with the rapid development of non-linear media, especially the Internet, and the associated escalation of convergence phenomena. It has become increasingly clear that making the transition from PSB to PSM requires effectively renewing the public service ethos because it alone remains the ground for any convincing case.

The number of commercial television channels far outnumbers public channels in dual markets and there has been growing disappointment about the impact because burgeoning commercialisation is the most influential aspect of “dualisation” in European broadcasting today (Donges & Puppis, 2003). Two

decades of commercial competition has produced more choice, stimulated independent production, and forced internal reorganisation and renewal for PSB. Despite the advances it has not, however, delivered on the promised expectations of greater diversity and much lower overall costs, or resisted the influences of globalization in either ownership structures or content profiles; quite the contrary.

Convergence, globalization and digitization legitimate the social importance of PSM. Convergence can increase the possibilities for media pluralism and discursive diversity. More channels of more types can be available in the digital stream. Greater choice and wider participation would characterise the ecology. That is, essentially, what the commercial lobbies claim we should expect. But experience to date has more often demonstrated the down side. Vertical and horizontal integration erect barriers by increasing the entry costs and narrowing the players. Synergy and economies of scale reduce market competition and transnational conglomerates unravel domestic media policy objectives. In that light, public service mediation offers a unique, beneficial resource providing a needed counterweight that stimulates robust competition not only between channels and in programming but as importantly between *approaches* to mediation. That is the pulse at the heart of the European dual system. Thus, competently serving the public interest in a commitment to media pluralism requires that convergence policy necessarily also be about *divergence*.

This is recognised in most Western European countries as there remains considerable support for public broadcasting institutions (Green, 2005). But the commercial drive against PSM is at least as strong in many respects. The alternative of de-institutionalising PSB by creating a 'distributed public service system' is a recent strand in the effort to undermine the enterprise. Many do not find the idea convincing because a certain scale and scope of operation is necessary to guarantee full and effective public service (Nissen, 2006a), as well as competitiveness. This is a key aspect in the rationale commercial companies rely on to secure approval for consolidation, even while it is ironically denied to PSB in the strategy commercial lobbies are now using to weaken the likelihood of success in the transition to PSM (Coppens & Saeys, 2006).

In fact the drivers challenging PSB and stimulating PSM are precisely the same as those pushing development trends in the commercial sector. These are two sectors in a common industry. The drivers are digitization, globalization, convergence, fragmentation and neo-liberalism combined with post-modernism (Storsul & Syvertsen, 2007; Nissen 2006a and 2006b; Wheeler, 2004; Syvertsen, 2003; Van Cuilenburg & McQuail, 2003; Ward, 2003). The combined impact is producing our increasingly complex media ecology which prioritises convergence as the governing dynamic.

The commercial lobbies strive to undermine public service in order to advance private capital interests. Inconsistency is no impediment in that pursuit. As Nissen (2006a: 5) observed in a report for the Council of Europe, "While the key criticism from this group used to be that public broadcasters were operating inefficiently, misusing funds and only catering for the tastes of elitist

minorities who provided the funding, [they] now accuse public broadcasters of being too successful and misusing their leading position". Wessberg (2004) concluded even earlier that "the commercial lobbies want public service media regulated in ways and to an extent that would make them non-competitive, non-developmental, and ultimately insolvent".⁴ Public service companies must compete successfully to maintain legitimacy, but as Wessberg noted, "the degree to which PSB will be *allowed* to compete is the crucial question".

For PSB, competition is thus paradoxical (Born 2004; Lowe & Alm, 2000) because when public service broadcasting companies are successful the commercial sector calls that market distortion, but when public service broadcasters aren't successful enough the commercial sector says PSB lacks legitimacy and is a waste of public money. "If one is to believe the commercial media lobbies in Europe, public service broadcasting is either too successful to tolerate or too unsuccessful to justify" (Wessberg, 2004).

But PSB must compete and it is certainly needed for achieving a healthy societal balance in commerce versus culture. That is further demonstrated in another pressurising dimension of convergence in media – globalization. The commercial media sector is increasingly international, in contrast with PSM which is mainly domestic. As Nissen (2006a: 10) observed, "The main actors on the media scene are now international corporations unrestricted by frontiers and national ties. They have no territorial allegiances nor do they have obligations to cultural heritage". The broad dynamics that enable this are a combination of horizontal consolidation and vertical integration. As Miller (2002) found in his research about the consequences of media concentration, the top 10 global firms (which include, for example, Bertelsmann, News Corp, and AOL/Time Warner) amount to cartels which control a lion's share of media and media properties today. Only PSB stands any fair chance of competing effectively.

But due diligence is certainly merited given that the strength and complexion of convergence drivers fuel internal and external threats in the transition to PSM. Internally there is the danger that commercialism and business logic will undermine the ethos on which its social legitimacy depends. Externally there is the problem of PSM competitive success eroding commercial profits which stimulates complaints about market distortion. It is quite clear already, and socially problematic, that convergence-related trends are contributing to the development of a media ecology in which universally available, free-to-air mass media have an uncertain future. The push is for thematic channels, alternative delivery platforms and personalised services. Thus, "the central questions [are] where does PSB go from here, how should it develop to fulfil its public purpose, and how is this development to be funded?" (Steemers, 1999: 46). Unlike the 1990s, the issues today are less about PSB preservation than about PSM presence. As Ward (2003: 247) concluded, the biggest need is to "determine the role of the public sector on the multichannel platforms" which, he argued, need "to develop a public service ethos". We suggest that the soul of the PSM ethos is *communication in the public interest*.

From transmission to communication

The evolution from a transmission mode (in Bordewijk & Van Kaam's typology "allocation") to a proper communication mode demands that public service broadcasters learn to be public service communicators. That is crucial because media-society relations are likely to be less about the 'information society' than the 'interaction society' (Crampton, 2005). The combination of one-way media technologies and the Enlightenment-oriented paternalistic assignment of the last 80 years produced a supply-driven (or push) PSB culture. What is now needed is a demand-driven (or pull) PSM culture. This requires a rigorous mental and cultural shift in organisational arrangements and perceptions, as PSB strategy managers know. Since the late 1990s and right across Europe, public service broadcasters have been working to define and establish new relations with "the society they operate in and are mandated to serve" (Søndergaard, 1999: 22). They are increasingly doing that with an emphasis on the public as user and 'client' (Lowe, 2007). This change in mentality is of pivotal importance and is quite complicated.

The broadcaster thinks in terms of transmission.⁵ The idea is to create a finished programme and transmit it to an audience, which is consigned a largely passive role: the primary activity is giving attention. The audience is typically defined as a "target" and success is evaluated on the basis of quantitative ratings. These concepts are inadequate to the wider social interests inherent in PSM (as usefully assessed in the chapter by Savage). The core challenge for practitioners is rooted in changing deeply conditioned understandings that have long been fundamental to professional identity in broadcasting. The challenge is compounded in the public service setting due to the paternalist heritage.

New media feature stark conceptual differences. Here the market isn't described as an audience; the agent is a user. The difference in terminology indicates an active role. Multimedia is necessarily interactive; the channel is obligated to interact with users. Unlike audiences, users not only attend but also activate. In broadcasting the programme is a finished product, but in multimedia the programme is a software platform. Both code and content are a constantly evolving chronicle of interests and activities in which users shape the narrative.

Multimedia is more about process than product in the sense that its value is keyed to accumulation rather than closure. Thus, seizing the best possibilities requires a tight emphasis on the dynamics of mediation processes as social phenomena rather than media products as industrial material. Process is about roles rather than rights because no one owns a process but everyone can be affected by it. Multimedia is both challenge and opportunity because it is essentially about services more than products per se. A product depreciates; a service appreciates. A product is a done deal; a process is a continuing saga. All of that dovetails with Rifkin's (2000) influential thesis that modern capitalism is shifting from the ownership of material properties to the leasing of access as service-oriented information age societies specialise in intellectual expertise and design.

In thinking about multimedia, broadcasters and policy makers are thus required to *rethink* broadcasting. High relevance and broad reach can produce an outcome for a PSM Internet site that is as much an exercise in 'broadcasting' as the transmission of a television or radio programme. But none of this means that linear transmission has no future. The new media of each era supplement rather than replace existing media (Winston, 1998). People use media in parallel according to the relative strengths and functionalities of each modality. We call this the 'singularity principle', which is complementary with 'functional equivalence' theory (Robinson et al., 2002). It means that each medium occupies a niche, or some series of niches, in the social practice of everyday life that other media don't fill as well for a variety of reasons, usually technical and economic.

It is easy to get carried away by the spice of newness and forget that plain vanilla radio and television broadcasting are popular media of everyday social life for quite practical reasons. It will continue to evolve so long as individuals and societies need the cohesion building and integrating function that only massmedia can provide cost effectively, immediately and easily. These remain the most efficient platforms for a type of communication that creates a widely shared public forum (Newcomb, 2000). Transmission media are for and about big things that matter to everyone and are irreplaceable for 'working through' (Ellis, 2000) to maintain a healthy democratic and pluralistic society.

One should also observe that media are reflexive precisely because they are socially grounded. Companies adapt to popular trends and adopt competitor success strategies, and strategise to avoid observed mistakes. Moreover, in the converged organisation each company works to integrate products and services across its media platforms and consumer applications. Further, newer media adapt familiar functions. Web sites have long utilised principles perfected in newspaper and magazine lay-out design, and are recently beginning to also mimic television as Flash technology develops. This reflexive character of media is especially evident in formatting.

Linear viewing habits will not disappear, although the time devoted to television viewing, in particular, can grow only gradually at best and may suffer slow decline. The BBC estimates that by 2015 Britain's television households will only spend about 30 percent of their viewing time with linear, generalist channels and will use more platforms alongside free-to-air broadcast channels. To maintain a reasonable level of audience reach and popularity managers must strategise a portfolio of platforms, channels, services and products. That is required in both commercial and non-profit sectors. That is why we increasingly see production companies focusing on the development of cross-platform formats and investing to integrate linear and non-linear content, especially interactive features.

For public service communicators effectively developing linear and non-linear media in the multimedia context requires rethinking their role beyond existing services and familiar modes. What is their role in public service provision and how can they develop a coordinated multimedia strategy (synergy) for that? PSM means that more services can be provided to more publics, with both services

and publics handled in finer granularity, but the greatly expanded options are problematic in consideration of limited resources. A public service ethos is the touchstone for defensible decisions regarding development in and expansion of content and services in the PSM context.

Towards cross media and cross genre content

The core challenge is in large part keyed to generational changes. The imbalance between large groups of older PSB audiences and large groups of younger people not using PSB channels or services is an acknowledged problem (see the chapter by Costera Meijer for insightful discussion, particularly related to news). According to recent findings published by the Pew Research Center, Generation Y teenagers are “rapidly becoming some of the most nimble and prolific creators of digital content online” (Zeller, 2005). They are mastering inexpensive media tools to create content and publish it on the Internet. In essence, they are developing prosumer (producer-consumer) patterns. Lee Raine, the Director of the Pew Research Center, described the core challenge concisely:

At the market level, this means old business models are in upheaval. At the legal level this means the definition of property is up for grabs. And at the social level, it means that millions of those inspired to create have a big new platform with which they shape our culture (Zeller, 2005)

Public service practitioners must adapt to reach and satisfy an increasingly complex public (publics). Cross media strategies are crucial in this, as is developing new genres and formats. We see the recognition of this in the 360° Commissioning system at the BBC where producers are required to conceive media properties that are cross-platform and multimedia as part of the pitch, i.e. before production and as a pre-condition for funding approval. We see practical results in efforts to create distinctive popular public service formats (Kjus usefully examines this in his chapter). We find organisational emphasis in restructuring initiatives at the BBC, YLE, DR and NRK, for example, where the goal is to develop structures that are less media-specific and more content driven. Cross-media operations should improve results in performance, costing and production.

Among the biggest threats to the public service enterprise in this area of PSM development is the potential for blur in content profiles which make it increasingly difficult to draw clear distinctions with commercial competitors. “The perceived sense of blurring between the objectives and output of commercial and public media is crucial because it brings us back to the definition of PSB” (Steemers, 1999: 50). This blurring is a product of multiple threads which include the move into thematic content and niche channels and the provision of value-added services, as well as growth in the international format market along with independent production via outsourcing both to fulfil

quotas and to lower costs (Moran, 2007). Moreover, one can't ignore the need to compete aggressively for talent which today works across sectors for the highest bidder. Finally and directly relevant to change in mentality, there is threat in the adoption of commercial language, theory and practice evident in PSB business-oriented management.

For public service media to fulfil its obligations it must be mass media regularly used by all citizens even while content and services must be distinctive. Being distinctive risks alienating the mass audience. That is a fundamental paradox. "If the first prerequisite is not met public broadcasting might easily turn into a service without a public [while] if the second condition is neglected the public is not served in a way that can substantiate the existence of public broadcasters and their public funding" (Nissen, 2006b: 68). The paradox is more complex in light of the complicating importance of taste and standards in a postmodern society condition. The crux of the problem here is that PSB regulation rightly respects enlightenment objectives (see the chapter by Lukács for incisive treatment in the convergence context), but these ideals are out of fashion in today's increasingly individualised and consumerist social context. Syvertsen (2003) summarises the matter rather well:

Public broadcasting regulation...is clearly based on the view that some cultural products are more valuable than others and that it is necessary to protect these through regulation and support. A more post-modern attitude presumes, however, that these value judgements are based on traditional taste and cultural hierarchies that may no longer be viable and that it is therefore not self-evident why these cultural forms should continue to be protected... [thus], if no forms of content are better than others, it is hard to explain why some companies should have a privileged position (ibid: 163). [Moreover] the influx of post-modern sentiments also provides fertile ground for consumerist and neo-liberal claims that consumers are the only relevant arbiters of taste (ibid: 164).

The problem of blur in a postmodern context supports the three content implications that Nissen (2006b) identified as general obligations of public service media. The first is to promote social cohesion.

The general trend towards globalization and internationalisation, regional integration of nation states and individualisation of citizens requires modern society to find mechanisms that counter this fragmentation and create social cohesion. Electronic media and services adapted to the new context of the information society can serve this role (ibid: 19).

The second and subsequent to that is keeping a tight focus on fully serving needs related to cultural diversity and the demands of democratic process (for the later especially, see the chapter by McNair). The EBU Digital Strategy Group (2002) usefully observed that public service broadcasting is an 'island of trust'

that is more important than ever in an increasingly commercial and fragmented media ecology (Hackett & Carroll, 2006). A crucial content challenge for PSM is keeping faith with excellence in the editorial function which is a unique component of the public service brand. Because trust builds and values the brand (Buttle, 2005; Newell, 2003; Lederer & Hill, 2001).

The third obligation is to see to the needs of special groups and individual users of public media. Old divisions such as citizens versus consumers and high/elite versus low/popular culture are increasingly dysfunctional. One impact is that PSB has often lagged in achieving innovation because product perspectives still focus on formats geared to and framed by such distinctions. Thus we find that PSB lags in producing hybrid programmes in part because they cleave to the (also classical) division between information versus entertainment (for useful critique see the chapter by Palokangas). As a result commercial channels and production companies, such as Endemol, have the lead and are more innovative in successful formulas and formats. So there are quite practical reasons for PSB to rethink its programme policy in relation to social and societal transformations (for a fruitful discussion see the chapter by Bruun). That is the crux of the service aspect in public service media.

Conclusion: The public as partner

The core challenge in developing PSM encapsulates the governing dynamics of contemporary media-society relations in Europe (and arguably beyond). That is what simultaneously renders this transition so difficult and so exciting. How the relevant issues are decided will strongly influence the character and quality of social life in these early decades of the 21st century when path dependency is being established via digital media policies and practices. The social shaping perspective shows that outcomes are relevant to much more than concerns about media per se; they are directly relevant to the relations that will characterise public life and private lives in our increasingly mediated social environment. PSM is a forum for renewed conceptualisation about the values, processes and practices that will ultimately affect everyone to an important degree because media and society are interdependent.

David Levy (1997) suggested that even in a social environment and media ecology so replete with technological change as a product of digitization, there will be continuing political support on the basis of essential interest in social and cultural priorities. That optimism is encouraging. But it must be interrogated alongside a competing view characterised by David Poltrack from CBS, the American network television company: "In our research with consumers, content on demand is the killer app. They like the idea of paying *only* for what they watch" (Thomson, 2005), and, we can add, for what they use.

PSM must be legitimated more explicitly than PSB ever required in order to insure its development, its continuing distinctiveness and competitive fairness in media markets. Strategy is often informed by institutional self-interest rather

than commitment to genuine public interest objectives (Hackett & Carroll, 2006; Ang, 1991). Strategic managers inside PSB must be careful to resist that character of thinking. Being public service communicators requires orienting away from the constant internal obsession to a consistent external obligation. Of course PSB institutions have already undergone considerable change, but in fairness much of that has mainly focussed on internal dynamics: managerial competence, strategy and business theory, enhanced efficiency, better contracts and wiser agreements, outsourcing, the matrix organisation, etc. All of that is probably needed, but it is not the core challenge.

In our view, the PSM mission lies in rigorously honing an audience-centred view. This implies serving citizens in all the ways their public interest activities seek to fulfil social, cultural and democratic needs. The core challenge is in large part about succeeding in the mental transition from supply-oriented PSB thinking to demand-oriented PSM thinking. Ultimately that requires a focus on audiences (see the chapter by Van der Wurff, especially). Achieving this demands voluntarily accepting vulnerability which is rarely painless. But it is the key to creating a relationship in which publics really are partners. The possibilities offered by non-linear media challenge everyone committed to the public interest to practice a variety of convergence of a superbly beneficial kind – collaboration.

Being the most dynamic, innovative and successful sector in media services development requires PSB to develop convincing arguments and practical instruments that make its public dimension more explicit and transparent on the one hand, and its service dimension more effective and efficient on the other. To be the best in media services for the public, PSM must not lose faith with the core public service ethos that is rooted in PSB, but neither can PSM succeed without developing that ethos to transcend PSB.

Policy makers have a defining role as well in requirements for assessing and re-defining what the European dual system ought to mean, and by establishing the parameters that shape its social presence. This will not be determined by economy or technology, in our view. In the end it can only be decided on the basis of social imperatives and in partnership with the public. We hope this book contributes to a vigorous debate about the society we ought to build and the values that must be defended and developed to do that.

Notes

1. For explanation and discussion about the 'polymedia' concept please see Alm and Lowe (2001).
2. See the report submitted to the Council of Europe by Christian S. Nissen (2006a) which is now foundational for policy conceptualisation. A related project focused on elaborating a conceptual model for the role of PSM in facilitating wider democratic participation by individuals is currently underway and due (by Lowe) in November 2007.
3. The UK and Finland are notable exceptions as a commercial operation was introduced in these countries in 1957. Of course Luxembourg is also an exception, and to an exceptional degree, in the European historic context.

4. The speech is available from the RIPE conference archives for 2004. That can be accessed via the current web site, which was built for the 2006 conference. The address is: www.yle.fi/ripe.
5. Portions of this section were written by Lowe originally as remarks delivered in a 2001 speech by former President of the EBU, Mr. Arne Wessberg.

References

- AITEC (2000) A Critique of Neo-Liberal Theories. Available at: <http://www.globenet.org/aitec/chantiers/sp/theorie/acte11marchENG part2.htm>
- Alm, A. and Lowe, G.F. (2001) Managing the Public Polymedia Enterprise: Synergy and Amalgamation in Finnish Broadcasting. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 45(3), pp.367-390.
- Ang, I. (1991) *Desperately Seeking the Audience*. London: Routledge.
- Barber, B.R. (2002) A Failure of American Democracy. *International Herald Tribune*, July 30, p.4.
- Bardoel, J. and Brants, K. (2003) From Ritual to Reality: Public Broadcasters and Social Responsibility in the Netherlands. In Lowe, G.F. and Hujanen, T. (eds.) *Broadcasting & Convergence: New Articulations of the Public Service Remit*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- BBC (2004) *Building Public Value: Renewing the BBC for a Digital World*. London: BBC.
- Beam, A. (2006) Tune In, Log On, Pay Up. *International Herald Tribune*, January 6, p.7.
- Blumler, J.G. (1992) *Television and the Public Interest: Vulnerable Values in West European Broadcasting*. London: SAGE.
- Bordewijk, J.L. & van Kaam, B. (1982) *Allocutie: Enkele Gedachten over Communicatievrijheid in een Bekabeld Land*. Baarn, Netherlands: Bosch & Keuning.
- Born, G. (2004) *Uncertain Vision: Birt, Dyke and the Reinvention of the BBC*. London: Vintage.
- Brooks, D. (2006) Bonding Online. *International Herald Tribune*, January 10, p.7.
- Buttle, F. (2005) *Customer Relationship Management: Concepts and Tools*. Amsterdam: Elsevier Butterworth Heinemann
- CEC Commission of the European Communities (2003, May 21) *Green Paper on Services of General Interest*. Brussels: C 270.
- CEC Commission of the European Communities (2001) *Application of State Aid Rules to Public Service Broadcasting*. Brussels: C 320/04.
- CEC Commission of the European Communities (1997, October 2nd) *Protocol on the System of Public Broadcasting in the Member States Attached to the Treaty of Amsterdam*. Brussels: C 340/109.
- CEC Commission of the European Communities (1997) *Green Paper on the Convergence of the Telecommunications, Media and Information Sectors, and the Implications for Regulation: Towards an Information Society Approach*. Brussels: COM (1997) 623 final, December 3.
- Chan-Olmsted, S. and Park, J. (2000) From On-Air to Online World: Examining the Content and Structure of Broadcast TV Stations' Websites. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 77(2), pp.321-339.
- Collins, R., Finn, A., MyFadyen, S. and Hoskins, C. (2001) Public Service Broadcasting Beyond 2000: Is There a Future for Public Service Broadcasting?, *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 26, pp.3-15.
- Collins, R. (1998a) *From Satellite to Single Market: New Communication Technology and European Public Service Television*. London: Routledge.
- Collins, R. (1998b) Public Service and the Media Economy: European Trends in the Late 1990s. *Gazette*, 60(5), pp.363-376.
- Coppens, T. and Saeys, F. (2006) Enforcing Performance: New Approaches to Govern Public Service Broadcasting. *Media, Culture & Society*, 28(2), pp. 261-284.
- Council of Europe (1994) *The Media in a Democratic Society*. Political Declaration, Resolutions and Statement, 4th European Ministerial Conference on Mass Media Policy. Prague, December 7-8, MCM(94)20.

- Crampton, T. (2005) Online Community Takes Sweden by Storm. *International Herald Tribune*, November 28, p.14.
- Donges, P. and Puppis, M. (2003) 'Die Zukunft des Öffentlichen Rundfunks – Internationale Beiträge aus Wissenschaft und Praxis'. Köln, Germany: Halem.
- EBU Digital Strategy Group (2002) *Media with a Purpose: Public Service Broadcasting in the Digital Age*. Geneva: EBU.
- Ellis, J. (2000) *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty*. London: I.B. Taurus Publishers.
- Green, D. (2005) The Public Realm in Broadcasting'. In *Can the Market Deliver? Funding Public Service Television in the Digital Age*. Eastleigh, UK: John Libbey Publishing.
- Ha, L. and Chan-Olmsted, S. (2004) Cross-Media Use in Electronic Media: The Role of Cable Television Network Branding and Viewership. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 48(4), pp.620-645.
- Hackett, R.A. and Carroll, W.K. (2006) *Remaking Media: The Public Struggle to Democratize Public Communication*. London: Routledge.
- d'Haenens, L. and Bardoel, J. (2007) European Public Service Broadcasting: A Concept, an Institution and a Practise. In d'Haenens, L. and Saeys, F. (eds.) *Western Broadcast Models: Structures, Conduct and Performance*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Hallin, D.C. and Mancini, P. (2004) *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Helm, D. (2005) Consumers, Citizens and Members: Public Service Broadcasting and the BBC. In *Can The Market Deliver? Funding Public Service Television in the Digital Age*. Eastleigh, UK: John Libbey Publishing.
- Hulten, O. and Brants, K. (1992) Public Service Broadcasting: Reactions to Competition. In Siune, K. and Truetschler, W. (eds.) *Dynamics of Media Politics: Broadcast and Electronic Media in Western Europe*. London: SAGE.
- Jarren, O., Donges, P., Künzler, M., Schulz, W., Held, T. and Jürgens, U. (2001) *Der Öffentliche Rundfunk im Netzwerk von Politik, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Eine Komparative Studie zur Möglichkeiten der Absicherung des Public Service*. Baden-Baden/Hamburg: Nomos.
- Jakubowicz, K. (2003) Bringing Public Service to Account. In Lowe, G.F. and Hujanen, T. (eds.) *Broadcasting & Convergence: New Articulations of the Public Service Remit*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- Jensen, J.F. (1999) The Concept of Interactivity in Interactive Television and Interactive Media. In Jensen, J.F. and Toscan, C. (eds.) *Interactive Television: The TV of the Future or the Future of TV?* Denmark: Aalborg University Press.
- Kleist, T. and Scheuer, A. (2006) Public Service Broadcasting and the European Union: From 'Amsterdam' to 'Altmark' – the Discussion on EU State Aid Regulation. In Nissen, C.S. (ed.) *Making a Difference: Public Service Broadcasting in the European Media Landscape*. Eastleigh, UK: John Libbey Publishing.
- Latzer, M., Just, N., Saurwein, F. and Slominski, P. (2003) Regulation Remixed: Institutional Change through Self and Co-Regulation in the Mediamatics Sector. *Communications & Strategies*, 50(2), pp.127-157.
- Lederer, C. and Hill, S. (2001) See your Brands Through your Customers' Eyes. In Harvard Business Review, *Customer Relationship Management*. Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation.
- Levy, D. (1997) Regulating Digital Broadcasting in Europe: The Limits of Policy Convergence. *West European Politics*, 20(4), pp. 24-42.
- Lowe, G.F. and Hujanen, T. (2007). *Assessing the Impact of the 1997 Amsterdam Protocol on PSB: Two Dimensions of Contention*. Paper for the 50th anniversary conference of IAMCR. July 2007: Paris.
- Lowe, G.F. (2006) *Customer Differentiation and Interaction for Innovation: Two CRM Challenges for PSB*. Paper presented in the RIPE@2006 conference in November in Amsterdam.
- Lowe, G.F. and Hujanen, T. (2003) *Broadcasting and Convergence: New Articulations of the Public Service Remit*. Göteborg: Nordicom.

- Lowe, G.F. and Alm, A. (2000) *Managing the Public Polymedia Enterprise: Four Paradoxes of Transformation Multiplicity in Finnish Public Broadcasting*. Paper for the annual conference of the Broadcast Education Association, BEA. Las Vegas: Available from the authors upon request.
- MacKenzie, D. and Wajcman, J. (1999) *The Social Shaping of Technology* (2nd edition) Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press.
- McQuail, D. (2005) *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*, 5th edition. London: SAGE.
- McQuail, D. (1992) *Media Performance: Mass Media and the Public Interest*. London: SAGE.
- Meier, H.E. (2003) Beyond Convergence. Understanding Programming Strategies of Public Broadcasters in Competitive Environments. *European Journal of Communication*, 18(3), pp.337-365.
- Miller, M.C. (2002) What's Wrong with This Picture? *The Nation*, January 7. Available on-line at: <http://www.thenation.com/special/bigten.html>
- Moran, A. (2007) *The Significance of Programme Formatting for PSB*. Keynote address paper and slides (*The Global TV System*) presented in the RIPE@2006 conference in the Netherlands. Available at www.yle.fi/ripe.
- Murdock, G. and Golding, P. (1989) Information Poverty and Political Inequality: Citizenship in the Age of Privatized Communication. *Journal of Communication*, 39(3), pp.180-195.
- Newcomb, H. (2000) *Television: The Critical View* (6th edition) UK: Oxford University Press.
- Newell, F. (2003) *Why CRM Doesn't Work: How to Win by Letting Customers Manage the Relationship*. London: Kogan Page.
- Nissen, C.S. (2006a) *Public Service Media in the Information Society*. Report prepared for the Council of Europe's Group of Specialists on Public Service Broadcasting in the Information Society (MC-S-PSB). Strasbourg: Council of Europe, Directorate General of Human Rights, Media Division.
- Nissen, C.S. (2006b) *Making a Difference: Public Service Broadcasting in the European Media Landscape*. Eastleigh, UK: John Libbey Publishing.
- Picard, R. (2006) Financing Public Media: The Future of Collective Funding. In Nissen, C.S. *Making a Difference: Public Service Broadcasting in the European Media Landscape*. Eastleigh, UK: John Libbey Publishing.
- Pink, D.H. (2005) The Book Stops Here. *Wired*, March, pp.125-129 & 136, 139.
- Porter, V. (1999) Public Service Media and the New Global Information Order. *Intermedia*, 4, pp.34-37.
- Rifkin, J. (2000) *The Age of Access: How the Shift from Ownership to Access is Transforming Modern Life*. London: Penguin Books.
- Robinson, B., Raven, J. and Ping Low, L. (2005) Paying for Public Service Television in the Digital Age. In *Can the Market Deliver? Funding Public Service Television in the Digital Age*. Eastleigh, UK: John Libbey Publishing.
- Robinson, J.P. et al. (2002) Information Technology and Functional Time Displacement. *IT&Society*, (1)2, pp.21-36.
- Schlesinger, P. (1993) Wishful Thinking: Cultural Politics, Media and Collective Identities in Europe. *Journal of Communication*, 43(2), pp.6-16.
- Schulz, W. and Held, T. (2004) *Regulated Self-Regulation as a Form of Modern Government: An Analysis of Case Studies from Media and Telecommunications Law*. Eastleigh, UK: John Libbey Publishing.
- Simpson, S. (2000) Intra-institutional Rivalry and Policy Entrepreneurship in the European Union. *New Media & Society*, 2(4), pp.445-466.
- Søndergaard, H. (1999) Some Reflections on Public Service Broadcasting. *Nordicom Review*, 20(1), pp.21-8.
- Steemers, J. (2005) Balancing Culture and Commerce on the Global Stage: BBC Worldwide. In Lowe, G.F. and Jauert, P. (eds.) *Cultural Dilemmas in Public Service Broadcasting*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- Steemers, J. (2003) Public Service is Not Dead Yet: Strategies in the 21st Century. In Lowe, G.F. and Hujanen, T. (eds.) *Broadcasting & Convergence: New Articulations of the Public Service Remit*. Göteborg: Nordicom.

- Steemers, J. (1999) Between Culture and Commerce: The Problem of Redefining Public Service Broadcasting for the Digital Age. *Convergence*, 5(3), pp.44-66.
- Storsul, T. and Syvertsen, T. (2007) The Impact of Convergence on European Television Policy. *Convergence*, 13(3), pp.275-291.
- Syvertsen, T. (2003) Challenges to Public Television in the Era of Convergence and Commercialization. *Television & New Media*, 4(2), pp. 155-175.
- Tambini, D. (2004) The Passing of Paternalism: Public Service Television and Increasing Channel Choice. In Tambini, D. and Cowling, J. (eds.) *From Public Service Broadcasting to Public Service Communications*. London: IPPR.
- Terrington, S. and Dollar, C. (2005) Measuring the Value Created by the BBC. In *Can the Market Deliver? Funding Public Service Television in the Digital Age*. Eastleigh, UK: John Libbey Publishing.
- Thomson, C. (2005) The BitTorrent Effect. *Wired*, January, pp.151-179.
- Tracey, M. (1998) *The Decline and Fall of Public Service Broadcasting*. UK: Oxford University Press.
- Van Cuilenburg, J. and McQuail, D. (2003) Media Policy Paradigm Shifts: Towards a New Communications Policy Paradigm. *European Journal of Communication*, 18(2), pp.181-207.
- Ward, D. (2003) State Aid or Band Aid? An Evaluation of the European Commission's Approach to Public Service Broadcasting. *Media, Culture & Society*, 25, pp.233-250.
- Wessberg, A. (2004) *The Backlash Against PSB Success: The Competition Paradox*. Keynote Address in the RIPE@2004 Conference, June 3, at DR headquarters in Copenhagen, Denmark.
- Wheeler, M. (2004) Supranational Regulation: Television and the European Union. *European Journal of Communication*, 19(3), pp. 349-369.
- Winston, B. (1998) *Media Technology and Society: A History – from the Telegraph to the Internet*. London: Routledge.
- Zeller, T.J. (2005) For U.S. Teenagers, Life is an Open Web Log. *International Herald Tribune*, November 4, p.12.

PSM PLATFORMS: POLICY & STRATEGY

Public Service Broadcasting in the 21st Century

What Chance for a New Beginning?

Karol Jakubowicz

Strange, but true: while in Africa PSB is regarded as “an institution belonging to the past” (Kivikuru, 2006: 7), in Europe after years of uncertainty the future of public service broadcasting suddenly seems assured – at least on paper.

The draft Audiovisual Media Services (AVMS) Directive, ready for adoption in 2007, says in a recital¹: “The Resolution concerning public service broadcasting reaffirmed that the fulfilment of the public service broadcasting’s mission must continue to benefit from technological progress. The co-existence of private and public audiovisual media service providers is a feature which distinguishes the European audiovisual media market”. Thus, the EU wants PSB to stay. And, in a stunning departure from the European Commission’s, and especially the Competition DG’s (Mortensen, 2006), stance so far, it now accepts that PSB should be free to use the latest technologies (Reding, 2006).

The Council of Europe has even more emphatically endorsed the public service remit in the Information Society. A Committee of Ministers (2007) Recommendation states “that the public service remit is all the more relevant in the information society and...can be discharged by public service organisations via diverse platforms and an offer of various services, resulting in the emergence of *public service media*” (emphasis added). The document is crystal clear on what this means: “the public service remit ... should be performed with state-of-the-art technologies”; public service media, or PSM,² should use “new interactive technologies” and should be “present on significant platforms”; also, “in view of changing user habits, public service media should be able to offer both generalist and specialised contents and services, as well as personalised interactive and on-demand services”.

For a long time, the two pillars on which PSM rests – support from the political system and from the audience (Siune & Hulten, 1998) – have wavered. Many governments have been holding back the modernisation and technological development of PSM (Aslama & Syvertsen, 2007) and imposing very detailed remits and public value tests, as well as governance and accountability mechanisms on PSM organizations (see the chapter by Barnett and then, for example, Coppens & Saeys, 2006; Bardoel et al., 2005; Coppens, 2005; Bardoel,

2003; Born, 2003; Jakubowicz, 2003a and 2003b). In many cases, they are based on outdated concepts of PSM. They may, and sometimes probably do, turn regulators and governments into the real target audience, with PSM managements seeking to satisfy the watchdogs rather than to serve their audiences in the ways they need to be served.

As for the general public, the ideological and cultural change unfolding in developed societies and involving individualisation, consumerism, privatisation, and anti-authoritarianism (Blumler, 1998), has led to questioning the very concept of the public interest. That undermines acceptance of PSM as an organisation that serves the public interest and aspires to performing a normative role in social life.

While the political statements of the EU and the Council of Europe mark a turning point, PSM will not have a future unless it changes significantly (Jakubowicz, 2006a; EBU Digital Strategy Group, 2002). There is need to modernise PSM and adjust it to new technological realities, but also and keenly to respond to changing social realities and social consciousness by redefining the remit and extending the range of content provided by PSM. However the key, and in my view decisive change, must concern the public service media's definition of *themselves*, and especially of their *relationship* with the audience.

Implementation of a thorough-going six-step strategy is needed to ensure the survival and future viability and development of PSM. It can be summarised in more generalizable steps *inter alia* by reference to the three letters that comprise the traditional term:

Remove ideological objections	PSM is based on public sector involvement in meeting societal and individual communication needs. Fundamental ideological objections to this arrangement are advanced by some quarters. They must be rebuffed.
Prove that PSM is still needed	Commercial media are said to offer "limitless choice", making PSM redundant. This must be shown to be untrue.
Replace the "B"	It is proposed that "B" for broadcasting should be replaced either with "M" for media, or "C" for content. The choice of one or the other will have far-reaching consequences.
Reaffirm and enhance the "S"	"S" stands here for the service rendered by PSM, i.e. the public service remit that requires extension and thorough modernization.
Deal with funding issues	Can licence fees go on forever? If not, a solution must be found.
Redefine the "P"	"P" stands for the public to which PSM dedicates and addresses its programming and other services. It has changed enormously since the 1920s. PSM must follow suit and put its relationship with the public on a new footing.

This chapter examines and explains the strategy. Given space constraints we concentrate on the most important issues.

Remove ideological objections

If anything eventually kills PSM it will not be technology but ideology; the biggest threat is that public intervention in the media and communications becomes politically untenable (Jakubowicz, 2007). It may be significant that the draft AVMS directive mentions private media first and public media second. This follows on from the European Commission's view (1999: 12) that "The future of the dual system of broadcasting in Europe, comprising public and private broadcasters, depends on the role of public service broadcasters being reconciled with the principles of fair competition and the operation of a free market". Public service media were still listed first at that time, but even so priority was already clearly given to market forces.

In the ongoing war between three competing ideologically- and axiologically-oriented approaches to PSM, the European Commission seems inclined – but for resistance from member states – to favour what we may call economic "liberalism with a human face". Its proponents accept that PSM should supplement commercial media, as the latter do not meet every need. Nonetheless, public media should not compete with private media, either in commercially attractive programming or in the use of the new technologies and platforms. This is a classical market-failure rationale for PSB (see Jakubowicz, 2006a; ACT, EPC & AER, 2004; VPRT, 2003). Commercial broadcasters have lodged approximately 30 complaints with the European Commission (Mortensen, 2005 & 2006; Ward, 2002 & 2003), questioning any new development in PSB that goes beyond the 1960s model of "one-size-fits-all" traditional and generalist broadcast channels addressed to the entire population of a country. The intention is to promote an "attrition model" of PSM, turning it into "mere museums of past excellence" (Blumler, 1998: 61) and leading to its marginalisation and slow death.

We should, of course, be thankful that the European Commission does not support what we may call the second, i.e. neo-liberal approach, which sees the market as the proper mechanism for the satisfaction of individual and social needs. State or public sector involvement in meeting individual and social needs is seen as unnecessary and is unwelcome. Therefore PSM should be dismantled (see McChesney, 1997), or otherwise made to conform to market forces.

The European Commission has, on the whole, handled State-aid complaints by the commercial sector so as prevent this war of attrition from succeeding. However by approaching PSM almost exclusively in terms of preventing any distortion of competition (Jakubowicz, 2004), the EU has reinforced policies pursued by governments under pressure from the neoliberals and "liberals with a human face". As a result, PSM has lagged further and further behind the pace of change that is sweeping developed societies.

By contrast, the Council of Europe with its human rights orientation may be seen as supporting the third of these ideological and axiological approaches. It argues that the community has a duty to guarantee that everyone can receive public-service oriented programming and content, encompassing both a “basic supply” of what people need as members of a particular society, culture, polity and democratic system, as well as content adjusted to special needs and interests. Supporters of this approach regard the market-failure rationale for PSM as insufficient. They view the axiological foundations of public service media, and the democratic, social and public value of media operation, as elements of a broader vision of a society and liberal democracy they seek to preserve (Murdock, 2005; Barnett, 2001; Graham, 2001; Graham and Davies, 1997).

Interestingly, the Council of Europe (Committee of Ministers, 2006) is seeking to extend the public service principle also to the new technologies, arguing that participation in the Information Society and access to Internet- and ICT-delivered information and content are essential elements of democracy and citizenship, and crucial to the exercise and protection of human rights.

Ideological opposition to public sector intervention into mass communications is countered by rising awareness that market forces can hardly replace public service media, or indeed meet many crucial needs. Ward (2006: 60-61) commented on their ability to provide public service content:

The answer is they can, but only to some degree and only to a very limited area of programming that is becoming even more marginalised with the increase in competition between channels and broadcasters... [W]ithout some form of state regulation, the broadcasting market would fail to achieve the policy objectives... that define broadcasting as central to modern societies... even in a competitive environment with multiple players there is strong evidence that ‘excessive sameness’ is particularly pronounced in the broadcasting sector... [A] purely commercially driven radio and television market suffers from... lack of supply in merit goods in matching social equilibrium.

As we will also argue below, commercial TV stations are abandoning public service content and becoming primarily “vehicles for the promotion of the wider commercial interests of their owners” (Cox, 2003: 10).

Precisely this has led the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (Gross, 2007) to note that “Media are too often primarily business-driven institutions and, by prioritising their business interests over the service to the citizens and democracy, inevitably contribute to the distortion of democracy... [So] in many countries and regions, the public sphere does not offer the necessary conditions for democracy. In too many regions there is no real media pluralism”. Therefore, governments should follow the example of Nordic countries where, “in every major town or region, the state budget finances a second daily paper, even if the market alone could not sustain it, in order to contribute to better conditions for a stronger democracy”. Habermas (2007) has also called for public subsidies for quality newspapers. If governed exclusively by market

forces and profit maximization, they will, according to Habermas, be overcome by populism and cease to perform their functions in support of democracy and the public sphere.

Since the public interest needs to be advanced in the media also in the digital age (Puttnam, 2007), and since it will clearly be orphaned by the commercial media (overcome by tabloidization and concentration of ownership), the need for public intervention in electronic media, and thus for PSM, may well be intensified. This is why Jowell (2007), former Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport in the Blair government, said: "Despite the profound changes ahead for the television sector in the coming years, I remain convinced that the case for public service broadcasting will endure". The Dutch coalition agreement of 2007 similarly states that "the importance of a free, pluralistic, accessible and high-quality public broadcasting service cannot be overstated" (Ministry of General Affairs, 2007: 38).

Prove that PSM is still needed in the digital world

The continuing need for PSM is confirmed by trends in commercial broadcast media. An examination of the British multichannel television landscape has shown that "arts, education, multi-cultural programmes, investigative current affairs programming, natural history programmes and the like continue to be under-supplied by commercial broadcasters, and that, apart from sport, there is little first run programming on multi-channel television which was made specifically for a UK audience" (ITC Consultation, 2000). So even in a large and rich television market, commercial television fails to meet all the needs that PSM is expected to fulfil. This market failure is primarily civic and cultural (Cox, 2003).

The digital switchover will promote cut-throat competition among a growing number of broadcasters and distributors of programming on various platforms (Papathanassopoulos, 2002), further reducing their ability to provide social value programming. Even satellite thematic channels (including Animal Planet and the Discovery Channel) are forced to offer more entertainment and go down-market instead of producing high quality content (often in areas and genres typical of PSB). Similarly, MTV "used to be the last word in youth culture [but now] is more about reality shows than rock stars" (Wallace, 2007).

In the UK, it is thought that the "commercial PSB broadcasters" would probably no longer be able to "deliver PSB in the longer term, well beyond digital switchover" (ITC Consultation, 2000: 8-9). Also Ofcom (2004: 33) identifies a period of "declining PSB obligations":

This period will start once the scarcity value of the analogue spectrum has fallen close to the opportunity cost of the PSB obligations on ITV1 and Five. It could occur well within five years. We should expect great pressure to reduce the PSB obligations [...] Ofcom would have to consider reducing PSB

obligations on ITV1 and Five. Channel 4 would face increasing difficulty in cross-subsidising challenging PSB programming from other parts of its schedule.

The consequences of digitalization do not end there. Norris and Pauling (2005) envisage the following process of change in television:

Table 1. Change in television

Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three
Multi-channel	Pay TV dominant	Broadband dominant
Pay TV & broadband on the rise	Broadband gaining	Free to air ?
Free-to-air remains dominant	Free-to-air in decline	Local content ?

Note: Adapted from Norris, Pauling (2005).

These authors explain that free-to-air television is losing audiences as people migrate to subscription channels and alternative services. Advertising rates have been growing even as audiences have declined, increasing the cost of reaching their target audiences and putting the sustainability of this business model in question. That is exacerbated by the increasing use of personal video recorders. All of this threatens turning commercial free-to-air channels into “television for the poor”.

Concerning local content, Norris and Pauling (2005) demonstrate that digital is dominated by global forces: The most successful pay channels are transnational or global, such as CNN, Discovery and Nickelodeon. Moreover, the pay TV and global environment does not meet the cultural requirements of public service broadcasting. In the larger markets there will be a mix of imported and local pay channels, while in the smaller markets the majority of pay channels are likely to be imported, giving little consideration to the fostering of national identity and culture. In European Union countries, European quotas in television attenuate the problem somewhat, but given the preceding it is only ‘somewhat’ at best.

The following points may thus be made concerning the role of PSM in the digital environment:

- Digital is dominated by pay-TV. This contrasts with the public broadcasting principle that programming is universally available and free to all at the point of use.
- Range and balance may not be achieved. Subscription channels are mainly niche channels and will not provide a full range of programming across all genres and subgenres, even taken together as a whole.
- Pay TV does not meet the democratic requirements of public service broadcasting. International news services (CNN or BBC World) cannot provide a full range of news and opinion on domestic issues, nor the forum for public discourse in the democratic process.

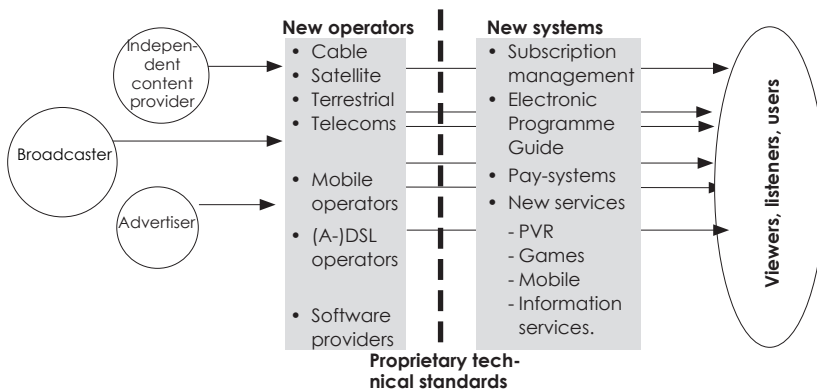
- The deficiencies of ‘me-channels’: Even with myriads of media items available on demand it is doubtful whether the principles of public broadcasting can be met and on-demand services will ever contain the full range of necessary content (Norris & Pauling, 2005; also see Rosen, 2004 and Sunstein, 2001 on fragmentation of society by “egocasting”).

Thus, the PSB role as the central force preserving the cohesion of society clearly needs to be safeguarded and, crucially, *extended* to the online world. This shows a continued, and indeed growing, need for public service media. Also the well-recognised role of strong PSM as an element of the structural regulation of the market, serving to raise programme quality and standards in the entire electronic media landscape (McKinsey, 1999) argues strongly in favour of not only its preservation but actually its development.

Replace the “B”

What the “B” should be replaced with is a matter of contention. Technology is multiplying both programme offers and platforms for the delivery of content, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The new system of content and service delivery



Source: Nissen, 2006 (after Andreas Weiss, ARD).

To survive in this new environment, public service organisations need to undergo fundamental internal change from media-oriented to multimedia-oriented organisations and adapt their programming and production structures to the requirements of the digital environment (EBU Digital Strategy Group, 2002). They should continue to provide traditional linear programme services for the general public, supplementing them with linear thematic services targeted to special audiences and also personal services performing “personalized public service” (Wiio, 2004).

These personalised public services can be programme-linked, or programme-independent, providing stand-alone content. Some examples of programme-linked services are provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Extending public service TV and radio with new media

Public service task	TV & Radio	Extending with New Media (examples)
Provide quality entertainment	• Entertainment shows	• Online games on the web • Interaction with entertainment shows
Provide 'value for money' by moving towards the Anything, Anytime, Anywhere paradigm	• Re-running radio and TV programmes	• EPG and metadata to make time-shift easier on PVRs • Provide archive material on-demand via the Internet • Streaming radio (and later TV) • TV and radio on handheld devices, e.g. news and sports
Inform the public of events of significance to their daily lives	• Broadcast extra news programmes	• Alert-services on mobile phones (text, image) • Providing extra information (on demand)
Encourage participation in public debate	• Invite listeners and viewers to take part in TV and radio programmes	• WEB and SMS-services as an integral part of TV-programmes (e.g. voting and comments) • Provide forums and 'communities' on websites
Educate	• Educational broadcasts	• Offer archive materials of educational value and interactive applications (with individual options)

Source: Nissen, 2006.

This demonstrates that PSM organisations must enter the non-linear, on-demand world (see Tambini, 2006) to accommodate the growing hunger of audiences for personalisation, downloading, access to programming and archives, podcasts, etc. This, in turn, requires redefinition of the *universality* of content and access, regarded as a distinguishing element of PSB in the analogue era (see EBU Digital Strategy Group, 2002).

All of that must presume that “B” will be replaced with “M” for media, amounting to a relatively safe scenario of PSM organisations, even though requiring revolutionary changes in the way they operate. However, as Jowell (2007) put it, “We may find ourselves in five years’ time talking about PSC – public service content – rather than PSB. We need to think about what forms that content might take as different patterns of distribution and consumption develop”.

What is the significance of this remark?

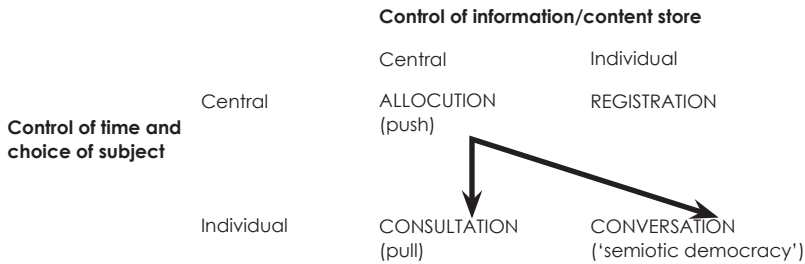
Digitisation turns all electronic media into “new” media: multimedia, interactive and potentially non-linear, able to combine mass and interpersonal communication (Cardoso, 2006). This promotes a process of “the mediatization of the Internet and internetization of the mass media” (Fortunati, 2005; see also Henten & Tadayoni, 2002), as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Three phases of the digital revolution

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
• Set-top boxes with over 200 digital channels. • Widescreen TV increasingly available. • Some near-video-on-demand (NVOD) and other limited interactive services. • Downloadable low quality video.	• Second generation set-top boxes, offering storage and a return path. • Improved interactive services and improved access to archives. • Reasonable quality downloadable video.	• Fully converged digital TV and web devices, with integrated media navigators. • Full portability and mobility. • Full interactivity and archive access.

Source: *The Future Funding of the BBC*, 1999.

The digital revolution signals a profound change in patterns of social communication, especially mediated communication, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Bordewijk and van Kaam: Typology of information traffic

Note: Adapted from: McQuail, 2005: 146.

Traditional mass media (including PSB) fell within the “allocation” model. Now, “allocation” is being complemented by “consultation” and “conversation”. This is aided by a new stage in the development of the Internet, known as Web 2.0, based on an implicit “architecture of participation” with an ethic of co-operation (O’Reilly, 2005; see also Sifry, 2007). Should allocation (linear media) not only be supplemented but also replaced by “consultation” and “conversation” (non-linear, on-demand delivery of content), then traditional media organisations (public or otherwise) would disappear. We would be left with “content” available – thanks to disintermediation – directly from producers, providers and aggregators, potentially via organisations such as the proposed Public Service Publisher in the UK (Ofcom, 2007).

But this is quite uncertain. Among different scenarios of future media development, Foster (2007: 8) formulated one of “transformation” that would eliminate “push” communication due to a very fast pace of new technology adoption, and supported by new fibre-based broadband access networks. There would be “a dramatic decline in the use of scheduled broadcast TV”. Many

consumers would make extensive use of content delivered on-demand over the open Internet. Distribution platforms would “act as common carriers, *linking millions of individual consumers to many thousands of content suppliers*” (emphasis added; see also Arthur Andersen, 2002). Then, says Foster (2007: 11), “the provision of public interest content will need to be fit-for-purpose in the broadband world – this means increasing use of on-demand and interactive content, rather than conventional scheduled channels”.

So the choice between “M” and “C” as a replacement for the traditional “B” implies fundamentally different arrangements for content delivery. However, media development has always been cumulative rather than substitutive so we may reasonably expect that linear media will continue in the foreseeable future.

Reaffirm and enhance the “S”

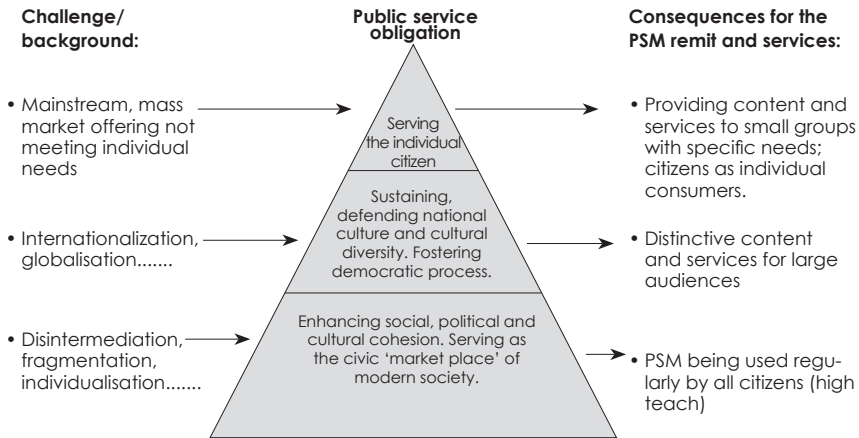
The model of PSM for the future can most appropriately be called “full portfolio distinctiveness”, encompassing both the full range of platforms and forms of delivery, and the full range of content PSM should offer (BBC, 2004). This content should be distinctive from that of commercial broadcasters (see Bar-doel et al., 2005).

The Council of Europe Recommendation discussed earlier (Committee of Ministers, 2007) recalls that CoE documents have defined public service broadcasting as, among other things:

- a) A reference point for all members of the public;
- b) A factor for social cohesion and integration of all individuals, groups and communities;
- c) A source of impartial and independent information and comment, and of innovatory and varied content which complies with high ethical and quality standards;
- d) A forum for pluralistic public discussion and a means of promoting broader democratic participation of individuals;
- e) An active contributor to audiovisual creation and production and greater appreciation and dissemination of the diversity of national and European cultural heritage.

All these tasks remain relevant and must be extended to respond to changing circumstances and challenges, primarily related to the new needs of audience-users. Some of these new circumstances, and the way PSM should respond, are presented in Figure 3.

Let us therefore consider selected parts of the PSM remit, beginning with tasks as regards political citizenship and democracy. The democratic polity has been coterminous with the nation-state. This is changing with the process of

Figure 3. PSM obligations – their background and consequences

Source: Nissen, 2006.

globalization and international integration. What is needed, therefore, is the creation of democratic systems at the supra-national level (see e.g. Bohman, 2007; Schmitter and Trechsel, 2004), including the creation of supra-national public spheres (Brüggemann et al., 2006) that extend civil society beyond state borders, etc. Accordingly, if PSM is to continue to adequately serve political citizenship and democracy, it must take on new tasks, including:

1. Informing citizens of the work of international organisations
2. Contributing to creating a public sphere and elements of a civil society at the regional, continental and global levels
3. Serving as a watchdog of international and global organisations
4. Developing social capital and a sense of community and co-responsibility for the nation-state at a time when cyberspace allows individuals to participate in virtual communities and become detached from their own societies and nations.

In the field of culture, new tasks stem from the process of globalization, migration, and the increasingly multicultural nature of many societies with the need to promote intercultural and inter-religious dialogue and understanding among peoples (Jakubowicz, 2006b). Three UNESCO documents (*Recommendation Concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace*; *Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity*; and *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*) identify some of the main issues involved. Thus, new PSM tasks in relation to culture involve:

1. Serving minorities and immigrant communities in a way that satisfies their cultural and linguistic needs, but does not prevent their integration with the rest of the population;
2. Creating a sense of affinity and understanding with the people of other countries in the region, especially if the country is involved in some international integration scheme;
3. Promoting intercultural and inter-religious dialogue at home and internationally;
4. Promoting acceptance of, and respect for, cultural diversity, while at the same time introducing the audience to the cultures of other peoples around the world;

At the same time and as we saw in Table 1, given that local content may be under threat in commercial electronic media, PSM organisations will need to develop into cultural industries (Hesmondhalgh, 2005) even more so than now. They should intensify efforts to promote domestic audiovisual production by maintaining a high share of original domestic works, maintaining local or regional stations or production centres, and commissioning production of radio, television and Internet content from independent producers from all regions of the country. PSM organisations should make optimal use of audiovisual archives by launching new channels, as well as other programme and content services, e.g. VOD (see Tambini, 2006).

Another field where PSM contribution has always been very important is education. In the Information (or Knowledge) Society (Drucker, 1994), new forms of education and different skills will be needed.³ Accordingly, new PSM tasks in relation to education include contributing to life-long learning systems, to *e-learning* and involve adjusting educational content to the requirements of the 21st century.

We have already noted how the new technologies, including especially the Internet, can undermine social cohesion (i.a. through fragmentation resulting from individualisation and egocasting) and that PSM is needed to counteract that trend. Hence new PSM social cohesion tasks include promoting e-inclusion and combating the digital divide. This involves:

1. Playing a leading role in the digital switchover;
2. Being available on all digital platforms, and thus attracting people to them;
3. Supporting traditional broadcasting content with Internet and interactive resources;
4. Providing multimedia interactive services, independent and complimentary web services;
5. Actively promoting digital media literacy and awareness of the tools of the information society, in particular the use of Internet;

6. Providing content in local and minority languages in order to encourage minorities to use the tools of the information society, as well as for groups neglected by commercial content providers.

Deal with funding issues

This is one of the most intractable issues. The short definition of the public service mission is that PSM organisations should be dedicated solely to the public interest and the interests of their audiences. Where commercial funding is involved, as in all but a handful of PSM organisations today, the interests of the organisation may take precedence (especially if most of the funding comes from this source). As the method of PSM funding is determined by governments, a confusing variety of systems operate in different countries (Papathanassopoulos, 2007). Therefore, the best we can do is to say that future funding methods will depend on a) future arrangements for public service provision in the electronic media and b) the outcome of the ideological battle over PSM. On the first question, if Foster's (2007) "transformation" scenario comes true one day, then Jowell's (2007) view that there might be "a role for funding, at source, the content makers themselves" would become relevant. This would mean "contestable public service funding".

If PSM organisations remain, change will be slower and will depend on who wins the day: neoliberals, liberals with a human face, or supporters of the concept of public service. Neo-liberals and liberals with a human face keep pushing for competition in the provision of public service and for different forms of a "contestable public service funding system" for PSM organisations (Giles, 2006), and also for "top-slicing" PSM licence-fee revenue.

Supporters of PSM argue that secure and dedicated financing must remain as a necessary pre-condition to safeguard the public interest. What form this funding should take is another matter. According to one view, since the very availability of public service programming is in the interests of society as a whole, including those who choose not to make any use of it, every adult citizen and foreign resident should pay the licence fee (Rumphorst, 2007). At present, two processes of change in this area may be observed.

One is extension of the licence fee to new platforms. In Germany the licence fee has been replaced by a "media fee", payable also by people without television sets but owning Internet-connected computers. In Switzerland, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden and France, the licence fee is obligatory for all those capable of watching television, regardless of what equipment they use. In the UK this applies to homes with computers equipped with a television card. The other tendency is to eliminate the licence fee all together and instead fund via general tax receipts (as in the Netherlands, Belgium and Estonia).

Which of these tendencies will prevail? We can only say that maintenance of the licence fee is likely to be increasingly difficult, especially in the on-demand

environment, and that alternative methods may become increasingly popular. If budgetary grants for PSM organisations are indeed introduced in a growing number of countries, then – according to Haraszti (2006) – the new system would need to meet the following three conditions:

- The sum of the yearly income must be sufficient to guarantee the proper functioning of the public service broadcaster.
- The necessary amount must be guaranteed for some years in advance in order to exclude yearly negotiations that could lead to editorial concessions and corruption.
- The amount of financing must be indexed against inflation.

Two Eastern European countries are introducing ways of meeting those conditions. Georgia has decided to introduce a rule that budgetary appropriations for the state/public broadcaster should remain a steady 0,15% of GDP. In Latvia, it has been proposed that from 2008 they should constitute no less than 0,73% of the total state budget.

According to some views, PSM organisations should be allowed to enter into co-operation with market entrepreneurs and engage in market-oriented activities (Søndergaard, 2000). The PSM organisations themselves have called for new sources of income and an ability to make money by adding non-public activities to those dedicated to delivering the public service remit (EBU Digital Strategy Group, 2002).

No clear picture emerges from the foregoing due to the multiplicity of solutions applied in different countries and to the volatile situation on the audiovisual market, where funding and business models for all players will long remain in a state of flux.

Redefine the “P”

Scannell (1989: 163-164) has noted that PSB – despite its “fundamentally democratic thrust” – has been based on unequal and asymmetrical relations between the audience on the one hand and broadcasters, cultural elite and the state on the other. That model of PSB was legitimated by social divisions and stratification. Since the 1960s the levelling of living and educational standards, as well as democratisation, have led to its rejection; hence the change in the second half of the 20th century towards a more emancipatory framework.

However, the process of social change continues. We have already noted that the ideological and cultural change unfolding in developed societies features individualisation and anti-authoritarianism (Blumler, 1998). This can further undermine the legitimacy of PSM and so these organisations need to go much further by redefining the relationship with their audience and opening content to “conversation” in order to build and maintain a constant dialogue with the public. On the first point, Collins et al. (2001: 11) pointed out that:

People should be able to feel that public service broadcasting is theirs [...] New media, as several public service broadcasters have recognized, provide striking opportunities to break out of [the] ‘take what you are given’ mode. But organizational changes also offer public service broadcasters opportunity to build new relationships of partnership, identification, and a sense of shared ownership which involve viewers, listeners and Web surfers – indeed, which make receivers into senders.

On the second point, PSM organisations are now faced with an audience that wants to communicate. The nature of this new stage is summed up by Küng’s (2002) comparison of “old” and “new” media (Table 4).

Table 4. “Old” and “new” media

Characteristic	“Old” Media	“New” Media
Core customer proposition	Information, education, entertainment	Synthesis of information, communication and service
Basic communication paradigm	One-to-many, mass	Two-way, personalized, interactive, on-demand
What is quality	“Quality” content fulfils exalted goals and has intellectual and artistic merits	Quality content keeps users on the site and is constantly refreshed and updated
Who produces content?	Experts dictate • Content-generation relies on artistic expertise and discriminating minds	Customer in the driving seat • Decides what, when, and in which form • The end of journalist knows best” • Successful content often generated by users
Structure	Linear, narrative, on or off, preselected or packaged, fixed schedule	Molecular orientated around 3-D hierarchical matrix

Note: Adapted from Küng, 2002.

The “new” media, according to Stark (2006), amount to a revolution based on a simple concept: semiotic democracy, or the ability of users to produce and disseminate new creations and to take part in public cultural discourse. What is emerging is “a digital commons” (Murdock, 2005), also known under other names, e.g. “information commons” (Kranich, 2004). This is also confirmed by the great popularity of social networking websites.

This provides fresh impetus for John Keane’s (1991, 1993) call for a fundamental revision of the public service model, such that it would “aim to facilitate a genuine commonwealth of forms of life, tastes and opinions, to empower a plurality of citizens who are governed neither by despotic states nor by market forces. It would circulate to them a wide variety of opinions” (Keane, 1993: 6). Changes in patterns of societal communication promoted by new technologies

make that eminently possible, as shown by the rising volume of user- or community-generated content, or user-created content (Wunsch-Vincent & Vickery, 2007) and by the fast development of community media of various sorts (see e.g. AMARC, 2007), as well as Internet-based open media. It is not, therefore, surprising that some authors are suggesting that alternative, Internet-based media may become “New Public Media” (see Rozanova, 2007).

Thus, Keane’s vision – which has a great deal to commend it – can largely be achieved by opening up PSM media to the world of semiotic democracy and encouraging them to keep abreast of trends in societal communication. The main avenues to explore are how to introduce user-generated content into the PSM programme offer – naturally without compromising its quality – and how to turn the audience into a “community of users” and a “social network of partners” in constant dialogue with the PSM organisation. The purposes are accountability and public participation in determining the direction in which the organisation should go.

This would encourage PSM to acknowledge the public as an active partner rather than supposing a passive receiver; facilitate reconnecting with the public in ways suited to the 21st century; and push public media to be truly public. Practical ways of achieving all of this requires thorough consideration, of course, but will fundamentally democratise PSM, bringing it into line with wider trends in society and social communication. A new chapter would thus be added to the evolution of public service media: a true partnership.

Conclusion

There is no guarantee that PSM will survive in the 21st century. It is, however, certain that it will not survive unless it fundamentally transforms itself. Public service media need to mobilise public support for the institution and their programme of transformation. The initiative rests with them. They can no longer afford to be, as many have been until now, overwhelmed by fast and all-encompassing change, confused, beleaguered or uncertain in how to proceed.

If they are successful in winning strong popular support and participation, and this can only be done by remaining relevant to the audience and partners among the general public, policy will take its cue from that.

There is a chance of a new beginning. It must be seized.

Notes

1. The reference is to the 1999 *Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States concerning public service broadcasting*, reading in part: “public service broadcasting has an important role in bringing to the public the benefits of the new audiovisual and information services and the new technologies”.
2. Below, we will continue to use PSB in discussing public service broadcasting in its historical aspect, and PSM when referring to its contemporary and future form.

3. See the list of competences for lifelong learning proposed by the European Commission (2005): Communication in the mother tongue and in foreign languages; Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; Digital competence; Learning to learn; Interpersonal, intercultural and social competences and civic competence; Entrepreneurship; and Cultural expression. Tapio Varis (n.d.) has proposed a different list of “new literacies”: Technology Literacy; Information Literacy; Media Creativity; Global Literacy; Literacy with Responsibility.

References

- ACT, EPC and AER (2004) *Safeguarding the Future of the European Audiovisual Market: A White Paper on the Financing and Regulation of Publicly Funded Broadcasters*. Brussels. Available at: http://www.epceurope.org/presscentre/archive/safeguarding_audiovisual_market_300304.pdf
- AMARC (2007) *Community Radio Social Impact Assessment: Removing Barriers Increasing Effectiveness. Challenges, Findings, Reflections, Experiences, Lines of Action for Community Radio stakeholders*. Montreal: World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters. Available at: <http://evaluation.amarc.org>.
- Aslama, M. and Syvertsen, T. (2007) Public Service Broadcasting and New Technologies: Marginalisation or Re-monopolisation. In de Bens, E. (ed.) *Media between Culture and Commerce*. Bristol: Intellect Books.
- Arthur Andersen (2002) *Outlook of the Development of Technologies and Markets for the European Audiovisual Sector up to 2010*. Brussels: European Commission. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/comm/avpolicy/info_centre/library/studies/index_en.htm.
- Bardoel, J. (2003) Back to the Public? Assessing Public Broadcasting in the Netherlands. *Javnost/The Public*, X(3), pp.81-96.
- Bardoel, J., d'Haenens, L. and Peeters, A. (2005) Defining Distinctiveness in Search of Public Broadcasting Performance and Quality Criteria. In Lowe, G.F. and Jauert, P. (eds.) *Cultural Dilemmas in Public Service Broadcasting*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- Barnett, S. (2001) *Money Can't Buy You Broadcasting Value*. Available at: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/debates/article-8-38-38.jsp>
- BBC (2004) *Building Public Value: Renewing the BBC for a Digital World*. London. Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/thefuture/pdfs/bbc_bpv.pdf
- Bohman J. (2007) *Democratizing the Transnational Polity: The European Union and the Presuppositions of Democracy*. RECON Online Working Paper 2007/02. Oslo: Centre for European Studies, University of Oslo. Available at: http://www.reconproject.eu/main.php/RECON_wp_0702.pdf?fileitem=5456095
- Born, G. (2003) From Reithian Ethic to Managerial Discourse: Accountability and Audit at BBC. *Javnost/The Public*, X(3), pp.63-80.
- Blumler, J. (1998) Wrestling with the Public Interest in Organized Communications. In Brants, K., Hermes, J. and Van Zoonen, L. (Eds.) *The Media in Question: Popular Cultures and Public Interests*. London: SAGE.
- Brüggemann, M. (2006) Segmented Europeanization – The Transnationalization of Public Spheres in Europe: Trends and Patterns (TranState Working Papers, 37). Bremen, Germany: Universität Bremen.
- Cardoso, G. (2006) *The Media in the Network Society: Browsing, News, Filters and Citizenship*. Lisbon: Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology.
- Collins, R., Finn, A., McFadyen, S. and Hopkins, C. (2001) Public Service Broadcasting Beyond 2000: Is there a Future for Public Service Broadcasting? *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 25, pp.3-15.
- Committee of Ministers (2006) *Submission to the Internet Governance Forum*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Available at: http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/media/1_Intergovernmental_Cooperation/MC-S-IS/CoEsubmission_IGF_en.pdf http://www.ebu.ch/CMSimages/en/DSG_final_report_E_tcm6-5090.pdf.

- Committee of Ministers (2007) *Recommendation Rec(2007)3 on the Remit of Public Service Media in the Information Society*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, Available at: <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1089759&BackColorInternet=9999CC&BackColorIntranet=FFBB55&BackColorLogged=FFAC75>
- Coppens, T. (2005) Fine-tuned or Out-of-key? Instruments for Measuring PSB-Performance. In Lowe, G.F. and Jauert, P. (Eds.) *Cultural Dilemmas in Public Service Broadcasting*. Goteborg: Nordicom.
- Coppens, T. and Saeys, F. (2006) Enforcing Performance: New Approaches to Govern Public Service Broadcasting. *Media, Culture and Society*, 28(2), pp.261-284.
- Cox, B. (2003) *Free For All? Public Service Television in the Digital Age*. London: DEMOS.
- Dahl R.A. (1999) The Shifting Boundaries of Democratic Governments. *Social Research*, Fall. Available at: http://www.findarticles.com/cf_dls/m2267/3_66/58118484/p10/article.jhtml?term=.
- Drucker, P.F. (1994) *Knowledge Work and Knowledge Society: The Social Transformations of this Century*. The 1994 Edwin L. Godkin Lecture. Available at: http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/ifactory/ksgpress/www/ksg_news/transcripts/drucklec.htm.
- EBU Digital Strategy Group (2002) *Media with a Purpose: Public Service Broadcasting in the Digital Era*. Geneva: EBU.
- European Commission (1999) *Principles and Guidelines for the Community's Audiovisual Policy in the Digital Age*. COM(1999) 657 final. Brussels: European Union.
- European Commission (2005) *Proposal for a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning*. COM(2005)548 final. Brussels: European Union.
- Fortunati, L. (2005) Mediatization of the Net and Internetization of the Mass Media. *Gazette*, 67(1), pp.27-44.
- Foster, R. (2007) *Future Broadcasting Regulation*. London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport.
- Giles, C. (2006) The Public Interest Challenges for the Communications Sector over the Next 10 Years: Contestable Public Service Funding. In Richards, E., Foster, R. and Kiedrowski, T. (eds.) *Communications: The Next Decade*. London: Office of Communications.
- Graham, A. (2001) Quality Not Profit. Available at: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/debates/article.jsp?id=8&debateId=38&articleId=57>.
- Graham, A. and Davies, G. (1997) *Broadcasting, Society and Policy in the Multimedia Age*. Luton: University of Luton Press.
- Gross, A. (2007) *State of Human Rights and Democracy in Europe: State of Democracy in Europe*. Report Doc. 11203. Strasbourg: Parliamentary Assembly. Available at: <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/WorkingDocs/Doc07/EDOC11203.htm>
- Habermas, J. (2007) Rynek, Media i Demokracja: Dlaczego Państwo Powinno Wspierać Opiniotwórcę? *Prasë. EUROPA*, 168, p.12. Available at: <http://www.dziennik.pl/Default.aspx?TabId=254&year=2007&nrw=168&art=634>
- Haraszti, M. (2006) *Present Myths, Future Perils in Public-Service Broadcasting*. Speech delivered at a conference organized by the European Broadcasting Union and Hungarian Television. Available at: <http://www.mtv.hu/ebu/cont.php?cont=speech>
- Henten, A. and Tadayoni, R. (2002) *Articulation of Traditional and Internet TV*. Paper presented during a COST A20 conference, Tromsø, Norway. Available at: <http://cost-a20.iscte.pt/index.jsp?page=documents>
- Hesmondhalgh, D. (2005) *The Cultural Industries*. London: SAGE.
- ITC Consultation on Public Service Broadcasting (2000) London: Independent Television Commission. Available at: <http://www.itc.uk.org>.
- Jakubowicz, K. (1993) Stuck In A Groove: Why the 60s Approach To Communication Democratization Will No Longer Do. In Splichal, S. and Wasko, J. (eds.) *Communication and Democracy*. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing Corp.
- Jakubowicz, K. (2003a) Endgame? Contracts, Audits and the Future of Public Service Broadcasting. *Javnost/The Public*, X(3), pp.45-62.

- Jakubowicz, K. (2003b) Bringing Public Service Broadcasting to Account. In Hujanen, T. and Lowe, G.F. (eds.) *Broadcasting and Convergence: New Articulations of the Public Service Remit*. Gothenburg: Nordicom.
- Jakubowicz, K. (2004) A Square Peg in a Round Hole: The EU's Policy on Public Service Broadcasting. In Bondebjerg, I. and Golding, P. (eds.) *European Culture and the Media*. Bristol: Intellect Books.
- Jakubowicz, K. (2006a) Keep the Essence, Change (Almost) Everything Else: Redefining PSB for the 21st Century. In Banerjee, I. and Seneviratne, K. (eds.) *Public Service Broadcasting in the Age of Globalisation*. Kuala Lumpur: AMIC.
- Jakubowicz, K. (2006b) If Not Us, Then Who? Public Service Broadcasting and Culture in the 21st Century. In Nissen, C.S. (ed.) *Making A Difference: Public Service Broadcasting in the European Media Landscape*. Eastleigh, UK: John Libbey Publishing.
- Jakubowicz, K. (2007) Public Service Broadcasting: A Pawn on an Ideological Chessboard. In de Bens, E. (ed.) *Media between Culture and Commerce*. Bristol: Intellect Books.
- Jowell, T. (2007) Speech to the Royal Television Society. Available at: http://www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Minister_Speeches/Ministers_Speech_Archive/Tessa_Jowell/TJspeech_rtc_20June07.htm
- Keane, J. (1991) *The Media and Democracy*. London: Polity Press.
- Keane, J. (1993) Democracy and Media: Without Foundations. In Manaev, O. and Pryliuk, Y. (eds.) *Media in Transition: From Totalitarianism to Democracy*. Kyiv, Ukraine: Abris.
- Kearns, I. (2003) A Mission to Empower: PSC. From Public Service Broadcasting to Public Service Communications. Speech presented on behalf of the Institute for Public Policy Research, Westminster e-Forum. Available at: www.ippr.org/research/files/team25/project61/WMF-Speech.doc
- Kim, E.G. and Hamilton, J.W. (2006) Capitulation to Capital? OhmyNews as Alternative Media. *Media, Culture and Society*, 28(4), pp.541-560.
- Kivikuru, U. (2006) Top-Down or Bottom-up. Radio in the Service of Democracy: Experiences from South Africa and Namibia. *Gazette*, 68(1), pp.5-31.
- Kranich, N. (2004) *The Information Commons: A Public Policy Report*. New York: Free Expression Policy Project, Brennan Center for Justice, New York University School of Law.
- Küng, L. (2002) *Redefining Public Service Broadcasting for the Internet Age*. Presentation delivered during a Cost A20 Network conference, Tromsø, Norway, June.
- McChesney, R.W. (1997) *The Mythology of Commercial Broadcasting and the Contemporary Crisis of Public Broadcasting*. The 1997 Spry Memorial Lecture. Available at: <http://www.com.umontreal.ca/spry/spry-rm-lec.html>.
- McKinsey & Company (1999) *Public Service Broadcasting Around the World*. London.
- McQuail, D. (2005) McQuail's Mass Communication Theory. London: SAGE.
- Ministry of General Affairs (2007) Coalition Agreement Between the Parliamentary Parties of the Christian Democratic Alliance, Labour Party and Christian Union, http://www.minaz.nl/english/government_policy/coalition_government/pdf/coalition_agreement_07.pdf
- Mortensen, F. (2005) EU and State Aid to Public Service Broadcasting 1992-2005. Copenhagen: MODINET. Available at: <http://www.modinet.dk/pages/aktiviteter/MediatedDemocracy/MediatedDemocracyAbstract5.htm>
- Mortensen, F. (2006) *New Media as Part of the Public service Task? The EU Commission's Interpretation of Article 86(2)*. Paper presented during the Media, Democracy and European Culture conference, Copenhagen, October.
- Murdock, G. (2005) *Building the Digital Commons: Public Broadcasting in the Age of the Internet*. In Lowe, G.F. and Jauert, P. (Eds.) *Cultural Dilemmas in Public Service Broadcasting*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- Nissen, C.S. (2006) *Public Service Media in the Information Society*. Report prepared for the Group of Specialists on Public Service Broadcasting in the Information Society (MC-S-PSB), Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Available at: http://www.coe.int/T/E/Human_Rights/media/1_Intergovernmental_Co-operation/MC-S-PSB/H-Info%282006%29003_en.pdf

- Norris, P. and Pauling, B. (2005) *Public Broadcasting in the Digital Age: Issues for New Zealand*. Wellington: NZ on Air.
- OFCOM (2004) *Review of Public Service Television Broadcasting. Phase 2 – Meeting the Digital Challenge*. London: Office of Communications.
- OFCOM (2007) A New Approach to Public Service Content in the Digital Media Age: The Potential Role of the Public Service Publisher. Discussion paper. London: Office of Communications.
- O'Reilly, T. (2005) What Is Web 2.0. Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software. Available at: <http://www.oreillynnet.com/lpt/a/6228>
- Papathanassopoulos, S. (2002) *European Television in the Digital Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Papathanassopoulos, S. (2007) Financing Public Service Broadcasters in the New Era. In de Bens, E. (ed.) *Media between Culture and Commerce*. Bristol: Intellect Books.
- Puttnam, D. (2007) The Continuing Need to Advance the Public Interest. In Richards, E., Foster, R. and Kiedrowski, T. (eds.) *Communications: The Next Decade*. London: Office of Communications.
- Reding, V. (2006) *The Role of Public Service Broadcasters in a Vibrant and Pluralist Eigital Media Landscape*. Speech delivered at a Joint EBU-MTV's conference From Secret Service to Public Service, Budapest, 3 November. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/reding/docs/speeches/ebu_mtv_20061103.pdf
- Rosen, C. (2004) The Age of Egocasting. *The New Atlantis*, Fall 2004/Winter 2005, pp. 51-72.
- Rožanova, J. (2007) Public Television in the Context of Established and Emerging Democracies: Quo Vadis? *Gazette*, 69(2), pp.129-147.
- Rumphorst, W. (2007) Public Service Broadcasting – Model Law. Geneva: EBU.
- Scannell, P. (1989) Public Service Broadcasting and Modern Public Life. *Media, Culture and Society*, 2, pp.134-166.
- Scannell, P. (1996) Britain: Public Service Broadcasting, from National Culture to Multiculturalism. In Raboy, M. (ed.) *Public Broadcasting for the 21st Century*. Luton, UK: John Libbey Media.
- Schmitter, P.C. and Trechsel, A.H. (2004) *The Future of Democracy in Europe: Trends, Analyses and Reforms*. A Green Paper. Strasbourg: The Council of Europe.
- Sifry, D. (2007) *The State of the Live Web*, April 2007. Available at: <http://www.sifry.com/alerts/archives/000493.html>
- Siune, K. and Hulten, O. (1998) Does Public Broadcasting Have a Future? In McQuail, D. and Siune, K. (eds.) *Media Policy: Convergence, Consolidation and Commerce*. London: SAGE.
- Søndergaard, H. (2000) *Does Public Service Broadcasting Have a Role to Play in the Digital Age: Global Media Cultures*. Working Paper No. 5. Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen.
- Stark, E. (2006) *Free Culture and the Internet: A New Semiotic Democracy*. Available at: http://www.opendemocracy.net/arts-commons/semiotic_3662.jsp#
- Sunstein, C.R. (2001) The Daily We: Is the Internet Really a Blessing for Democracy? *Boston Review*, Summer. Available at: <http://bostonreview.net/BR26.3/sunstein.html>
- Suter, T. (2005) *Ofcom Review of Public Service Television Broadcasting*. Paper presented during the meeting of the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities, Sarajevo.
- Tambini, D. (2006) On-demand in Demand: Public Service Broadcasters, New Services and Copyright. In Nissen, C.S. (ed.) *Making a Difference. Public Service Broadcasting and the Media Landscape in Europe*. Eastleigh, UK: John Libbey Publishing.
- The Future Funding of the BBC* (1999) Report of the Independent Review Panel. London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport.
- Varis, T. (undated) *New Literacies and e-Learning Competences*. Available at: http://www.elearningeuropa.info/index.php?page=doc&doc_id=595&doclng=6
- VPRT (2003) *Broadcasting and Competition Rules in the Future EU Constitution – A View from the Private Media Sector*. Available at: http://www.vprt.de/dateien/sn_020503_verbaende_zu_eu_konvent.pdf
- Wallace, M. (2007) *A Second Life for MTV*. *Wired*, February. Available at: <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/15.02/mtv.html>
- Ward, D. (2002) *The European Union, Democratic Deficit and the Public Sphere. An Evaluation of EU Media Policy*. Amsterdam: IOS Press, Ohmsha.

- Ward, D. (2003) State Aid or Band Aid? An Evaluation of the European Commission's Approach to Public Service Broadcasting. *Media, Culture & Society*, 25(2), pp.233-250.
- Ward, D. (2006) Can the Market Provide? Public Service Media, Market Failure and Public Goods. In Nissen, C.S. (ed.) *Making A Difference: Public Service Broadcasting in the European Media Landscape*. Eastleigh, UK: John Libbey Publishing.
- Wiio, J. (2004) *From the Information Society to a Knowledge-value Society: Public Service Digital Television as a Player in the Information Society of the Future*. Paper presented during the RIPE@2004 conference, Copenhagen and Århus.
- Wunsch-Vincent, S. and Vickery, G. (2007) *Participative Web: User-Created Content*. DSTI/ICCP/IE(2006)7/FINAL. Paris: OECD.
- Ytreberg, E. (2002) Ideal Types in Public Service Television: Paternalists and Bureaucrats, Charismatics and Avant-gardists. *Media, Culture and Society* 24(6), pp.759-774.

Commercial Services, Enclosure and Legitimacy

Comparing Contexts and Strategies for PSM Funding and Development

Hallvard Moe

European public broadcasters have long since ceased to be solely publicly financed. But the inherently controversial licence fee on television sets has remained a key source of funding. Facing an increasingly complex digital media environment, public service providers have expanded beyond traditional broadcast radio and television to embrace digital technologies and correlated fields of activity. Because the legitimacy of public funding is closely connected to specific characteristics of broadcasting, this development encourages the search for alternative sources of income. The potential transformation from public service broadcasting [PSB] to public service media [PSM] thus compels a thorough discussion of institutional funding schemas.

This chapter concentrates on elements of, and attitudes towards, commercial funding and arrangements that promote enclosure within and across media platforms. In some states commercial funding has traditionally served to demarcate between public service and private commercial broadcasting. In other states this division has not applied. To what extent, and how, have attitudes and regulations about funding changed in the face of new media platforms?

Enclosure is significant here and the term, as I use it, covers a range of ways to restrict media content which involve issues of control. Familiar enclosure methods today include subscription and pay-per-view services, encrypting broadcasting channels that require registration and decoders, and the constraints of proprietary software on the Internet. Each schema is about erecting walls around content via technical or economic means, or some combination of the two. Such enclosure is in opposition to the core PSB values of open access and universality wherein content ought to be available for everyone without geographic, economic, social, or technical impediment. How are attitudes towards such arrangements playing out in comparative contexts? What are the potential implications for the legitimacy of public service media? Answers to these questions are of keenest importance today and speak to the kind of future we may anticipate.

Relying on a comparative approach, I analyse how the strategies of public service broadcasters in three Western European nations correspond to their dif-

fering social and political contexts. The selected cases are Germany's ARD and ZDF, the BBC in the UK and Norway's NRK. These companies are all primarily funded by licence fees and are institutions with domestic PSB remits. All four companies face common challenges represented by a globalized broadcasting industry combined with the European Union as a powerful media policy actor (c.f. Holtz-Bacha, 2006; Jakubowicz, 2004; Lowe & Hujanen, 2003; Ward, 2003).¹ Yet they are different in relation to relevant analysis variables: They have diverging formal founding and organisational forms, exist within quite different political systems and cultures, and have been subject to dissimilar regulatory arrangements. In addition, their primary and secondary markets – and the competitors they face – also differ.²

The approach taken here is based on the observation that public broadcasters and media policy still *primarily* relate to national frameworks. Actual strategies, public debates, the role of competing actors, and regulatory regimes have developed over time and continue to vary significantly across states. The first part of what follows concentrates on how shared challenges related to commercial funding and enclosure have been applied in different national settings from the preparations for the digital era until 2007. Mapping the findings across contexts facilitates a discussion of the second main issue raised in this chapter: What do different strategies imply for the legitimacy of PSM funding schemas?

Strategies and regulatory frameworks

We begin by scrutinising the development of case strategies and corresponding regulatory frameworks in relation to commercial funding activities and enclosure arrangements. This discussion is based on analysis of guidelines, strategy and policy documents, letters to the editor, and news articles. This produces a needful comparison of differences and similarities that help us understand the cases with keen reference to the contextual features that define each case.

Commercial sources of funding

The NRK launched a forceful argument for a more efficient organisation in response to its first serious national competitors which commenced in the early 1990s.³ The PSB company quickly found that the licence fee, even in combination with cutbacks could not provide sufficient income to finance its ambitious aims; this difficulty has become ever more obvious in the emerging digital era (Moe, 2003: 114; NRK, 1995: 7).

NRK took a proactive approach that 'paid off' as Parliament changed the organisation from a foundation status to a state-owned limited company in 1996. This change of status facilitated subsidiaries to exploit commercial potential while keeping a level of political control. NRK Aktivum was established the following year to take care of all business activities connected to PSB.⁴ After later liberalisations, the current statutes approve of all "commercial activities the

objective of which is to create revenue for public service broadcasting activities” (MCCA, 2004: §3-2). On this basis, the broadcaster has actively sought commercial partnerships and revenue in programme production, and for teletext and Internet service development (Moe, 2003: 115); engaged in a failed initiative to commercialise the entire department for educational programmes (Gram 2001); acquired and launched magazines; and planned a theme park based on a children’s programme series (Wekre, 2006). Although the percentage of total commercial income remains small (see Table 1), the pretensions and scope of activity does not lag behind larger sister-institutions, as we shall see.

Table 1. 2006 sources of PSB funding in 4 cases

	NRK	BBC	ARD	ZDF
Licence fee per month (€) (2007)	21,6	16,6	11,9	4,2
Licence fee income (mill. €) (2005)	426,0	4 570,8	5 119,0	1 620,5
Other income (mill. €) (2005)	23,0 ⁱ	949,0 ⁱⁱ	682,3 ⁱⁱⁱ	266,7 ^{iv}
Percent of income from licence fee	95	78	83	86
Percent of income from commercial sources	5	16 ^v	17	14

ⁱ Approx. €12 directly from NRK Aktivum.

ⁱⁱ Approx. €270 directly from BBC Worldwide. The two remaining commercial subsidiaries are BBC World (international television news channel) and BBC Resources (events, programme production etc).

ⁱⁱⁱ Approx. €132 from advertising, and the rest stemming from co-productions, co-financing, marketing of programmes (including for auxiliary joint channels 3sat, K1.KA, Phoenix and ARTE).

^{iv} Approx. €99 from advertising, and the rest stemming from co-productions, co-financing, marketing of programmes (including for auxiliary joint channels 3sat, K1.KA, Phoenix and ARTE).

^v The remaining percents largely stem from a government grant for BBC Worldservice.

Sources: NRK 2006; BBC 2006c; BBC Worldwide 2006b; ARD 2006; ZDF 2006.

Actually the BBC has undertaken commercial activities since its inception.⁵ That isn’t really new. But until the 1980s the scope of such activities remained modest and was concentrated on programme sales (Briggs, 1995: 712). Beginning in the late 1980s the BBC commercial arm expanded robustly, absorbing businesses and launching new initiatives (Born, 2004: 59). Formal permission was in order and the Conservative Government’s 1994 White Paper on the future of the institution was tellingly subtitled *Serving the Nation, Competing Worldwide*. It encouraged the BBC’s development “into an international multi-media enterprise” (quoted in Steemers, 2005: 233). Not only would commercial revenue supplement the licence fee, the BBC should thereby bring “a distinctively United Kingdom voice, outlook and culture into the world market” (ibid).

That same year, the BBC presented its dual approach for the digital era: To add new free services to its publicly funded portfolio while the wholly owned subsidiary, BBC Worldwide, introduced subscription-based thematic channels. Since the BBC lacked resources to implement its own digital strategy, several commercial joint ventures were established during the 1990s, both for broadcasting and online (Steemers, 1998: 114). The strategy coincided with an internal public management-inspired reorganisation aimed at gaining additional savings to help fund the digital transition (Born, 2004). In the new millennium the BBC

operates and co-operates over ten subscription television channels, publishes well over 30 magazine titles, and has large income streams from international programme sales (BBC Worldwide, 2006a). The monies generated by such activities are quite large and reflect the global market potential enjoyed by the BBC (see Table 1).

Contrasting with the Norwegian and British cases, Germany's ARD and ZDF have been dually funded by advertising and licence fees since their establishment.⁶ The deregulation of German broadcasting in 1984 brought competition for viewers and a race for advertising money. A few turbulent years of highly polarized debate over the balance between public and private actors followed (Humphreys, 1994: 239). When a balance was struck after 1986, the public side was granted little room for extensive reorganisations or grand commercial initiatives.⁷ On the threshold of the digital era, then, these German PSB institutions' prospects were quite different in comparative terms. Their plans were therefore necessarily "more modest" due to "political hostility" to their ambitions for digital expansion (Steemers, 1998: 112).

Still, some commercial initiatives were undertaken by these German PSB companies, and principally by ZDF which has acted as a "catalyst for discussion and change" (Steemers, 2001: 78). Deutsche Telekom was, for instance, invited to co-operate in promoting a web-based news service. A more peculiar and unrealized project was the ZDF Medienparks initiative that envisioned an amusement park based on popular television formats (Gounalakis, 2000).⁸ The ZDF still operates programme sales services and a merchandise shop, as does the ARD. Their scope is modest but, interestingly, accounts have not made the clear separation between commercial and public income as is required in the British case.

These differences in strategic scope and regulatory frameworks are also evident in the role of advertising. Apart from a limited amount of sponsoring in television, mainly of large sports events, the NRK has had to keep its radio and television channels advertising-free. On the other hand, adverts appear throughout teletext services and across websites, including on front pages and inside news sections. This quite liberal arrangement is formally grounded in Norway's *Broadcasting Act*. The BBC has also been constrained from carrying advertising on its main television and radio channels, but in contrast with the Norwegian case the UK ban also covers BBC Internet sites and teletext services. A potentially significant break with this policy came as a proposal to start exposing overseas users of bbc.co.uk to limited amounts of advertising. The proposal reaped both external and in-house protests (Sweney, 2006a). In February 2007, the new BBC Trust moved to defer its decision to either deny or endorse the proposal (Conlan, 2007).

Following competition, the amounts collected from advertising by the ARD and the ZDF in Germany remains relatively modest. Regulations prevent these public service broadcasters from taking advantage of increases in advertising expenditure, e.g. by prohibiting ads after 20.00 (Holtz-Bacha, 2003: 112; Steemers, 1998: 104). Advertising rules are also restricted in terms of platforms. In

1997 a ZDF-initiated co-operative arrangement with Microsoft on the Internet triggered a political process resulting in a ban on advertising and sponsorship on new media platforms and teletext services, effectively ending the collaboration before it could fairly begin (Eberle, 2003: 7; Steemers, 2001: 79).⁹ Thus, despite a long tradition for mixed funding and even facing a digital media environment, the ARD and the ZDF have been intentionally hindered from developing commercial sources much further. Although the level of non-licence fee income is rather large for both these organisations, most of that stems from programme production-related activities and traditional advertising rather than the innovative initiatives both have sought on new platforms (see Table 1).

In summary, these cases clearly indicate the role of commercial revenue as a viable stream to support otherwise insufficient funding derived from licence fees. This is needed for the development of non-linear, digital services and platforms. Although the scope of possibilities for such development and the scale of potential revenues vary considerably, the trend is clearly associated with the transition from PSB to PSM.

Arrangements promoting enclosure

NRK broadcast services are at the outset freely available. The institution has protested against a peculiar regulatory exception allowing satellite distributors to encrypt and sell expensive subscriptions for the NRK's publicly funded channels (Eckblad & Seljord, 2005). But the NRK strategy is inconsistent because its fee funded television channels will remain openly accessible on the digital terrestrial network despite an earlier NRK plan to encrypt and require viewers to register to see public service television (Bernander, 2006).¹⁰ The plan, vetoed by the Government, would clearly have facilitated future commercial utilization and entailed greater enclosure in direct contradiction with their core public service values of open access and universality.

On new media platforms, however, the institution has had greater success with its strategy. While extensive web-TV content is freely available on the web at nrk.no, NRK Aktivum sells downloadable audio books over the Internet and plans to do the same with television content soon (Kibar, 2006). Further, commercial mobile phone services are used to market the potential of public service, according to former Director General John Bernander who said, "if we cannot provide telecos with extra revenue because we simply hand out free services to all, then they will turn to commercial partners who will give them something back" (Bernander, 2005: 4). Not allowing the NRK to "apply commercial logic practices" would marginalize and possibly even exclude it from media markets (Bernander, 2005: 4; also Sivertsen, 2007).¹¹ The NRK's attitude to arrangements that promote enclosure seems quite explicit. Presenting the strategy for 2006-12, Bernander maintained that "...on new platforms, users must pay both for distribution and for copyright clearance" (quoted in Selsjord, 2006a). Importantly, the owner signalled support right away (Selsjord, 2006b).

In parallel to its extensive subscription-based services, the BBC portrays itself as promoting unconstrained access across platforms. From 2002 and after the collapse of the subscription-based ITVDigital terrestrial television provider, the BBC (along with BSkyB) backed Freeview as its successor. It offers a bouquet of over 30 channels free to air. Further, an unencrypted satellite television service – designed to counter BSkyB's enclosed offers – was approved in early 2007 (Tryhorn, 2007). Audiovisual clips have been released online under a “creative archive licence” to “provide access to public service audio and video archives” and give “fuel” for the public's “creative endeavours” (BBC, 2006a; Sheppard, 2006).¹² A software platform for playing audiovisual content (iPlayer) is a recently approved component of this. The BBC does advance open access for licence fee payers on a universal basis and counters arrangements that promote enclosure.

Nevertheless, there are exceptions. News in mobile services, for instance, began as a commercial venture and only later was introduced as a licence fee funded service, and without public debate (Cave et al., 2004: 262). Another move was made in 2006 when a non-exclusive deal was struck with Microsoft. The IT giant's proprietary software and enclosed game consol hardware were deemed a key to reaching audiences without them always “having to come to bbc.co.uk” (quoted in Kelly, 2006). It seems that future access to BBC content will also feature enclosures.

Preparation for digital television in Germany was marked by several attempts to join public and commercial actors in a co-operative venture for a common satellite platform (Brockmeyer & Eichholz, 1999). When this failed, public service broadcasters concentrated on developing content for both cable and satellite, independent of network providers and commercial interests. From the first pilots in 1997 the ARD Digital and ZDF Vision units have built robust bouquets combining main channels with new and auxiliary ones, and experimenting in interactive services (Zervos, 2003: 20). These services are provided free and are not encrypted.

Questions about the encryption of television signals and arrangements for enclosure have been heavily debated in Germany. An extraordinarily high number of free to air public and commercial channels have constituted the unencrypted provision over the last decade. But facing digitalization, commercial providers now seek new revenue streams by way of enclosure. The ARD and the ZDF have, both individually and together, argued fiercely against this development, claiming it will fundamentally change the German market and create a digital divide in the population. The trend threatens to slow digital development in Germany (ARD & ZDF, 2006a: 337).

This attitude applies across platforms: After some controversy, the broadcasters secured that all publicly funded channels will enjoy free availability as IPTV from all providers and via non-proprietary standards (Digital Fernsehen, 2006a; Salmen, 2006). Correspondingly, audiovisual content for mobile phones are claimed as a timely accommodation to technological developments and also remain openly accessible (ARD & ZDF, 2006b: 3; Golem Forum, 2005).

German PSB is presented as the antidote to enclosure because it is available to all without extra costs or technical complexities. Thus, the public service values of universality and open access remain front and centre in Germany.

In the transition from PSB to PSM, public service providers are in general still principled supporters of non-enclosure. The ethos of universalism and open access are foundational to legitimacy. Such a stand is clearly a service to the public (that pays the bills) and therefore deserves access to PSM services. At the same time, however, it is also clear that maintaining a total non-enclosure and non-commercial stance is difficult in the digital era as licence fee revenue is inadequate to fund the mandates entailed in the expanding PSB remit. This is further complicated by the need for co-operative alliances and partnerships with private commercial firms that in part premise their business strategies on proprietary standards and enclosure arrangements. This is an area of considerable struggle, serious conflict, and long-term importance to the public interest in media in the digitized environment. Deeper, more critical analysis is useful here, and that is what we pursue next.

Mapping similarities and differences

The basis for what has come to be in terms of commercial expansion was already established by the early 1990s. The fundamental frameworks in which the public broadcasters have had to manoeuvre were well in place by then. In fact, the first wave of commercial activities had nothing to do with preparation for digitalization. Rather, the deregulation of analogue broadcasting markets in the 1980s compelled that initial search for alternative revenue sources. When digitalization was firmly on the agenda, a second wave of initiatives focused on possibilities for exploitation of new forms of content through new channels and platforms. This insight underlines the importance of keeping a certain historical perspective when scrutinising ongoing processes.

These four cases can be construed to represent a continuum of the elements, and attitudes about them, characterising commercial funding and arrangements that promote enclosure. In a relatively forthcoming political climate with generous leeway for launching commercial initiatives, the NRK's commercially and publicly funded services do not always appear to be as clearly separated. Several provisions are made that actually promote enclosure, especially on new media platforms. The BBC seeks to balance a far-reaching commercial arm with a clear focus on public service core tasks. Despite recent deviations that might pave the way for future problems with enclosure, the BBC has a relatively strict and uniform strategy detaching publicly funded domestic services from commercial activities, primarily directed abroad. Facing a digital media system, the ARD and the ZDF have found themselves in a stable regulatory situation that also enforces comparatively strict limitations on the latitude for commercial initiatives, although these are limitations the ZDF has been noticeably more willing to test than the ARD. But both actually have little flexibility to initiate new services that would produce alternative income. While advertising remains

an integrated part of their funding schemas overall and historically, it has not been expanded to include new platforms. Thus and despite a less clear separation of commercial and public income streams, as noted earlier, disallowing arrangements that promote enclosure ironically means that the ARD and the ZDF have the most “clean” or “pure” PSB value-based strategies.

The clearest correspondence in strategy is between the BBC and the NRK, with the former providing inspiration for the latter. Both have developed, and stuck to, explicitly proactive strategies embracing the commercial potential of PSM. But this is not to ignore keen differences. The NRK appears more willing to apply arrangements of enclosure on a pragmatic basis, as illustrated in the issue of encryption of digital terrestrial television. Moreover, the NRK seems less focused on stressing a rigid division between its commercial and publicly funded parts – a separation the BBC finds crucial. Overall, the British institution comes across as holding a more principled stand, securing a basic level of openness.

Further, the arguments mobilized in support of these two strategies differ significantly. For the BBC it was largely a matter of leveraging commercial potential in international markets to subsidise public services at home (see Birt’s text in BBC, 1998: 4).¹³ In the Norwegian case, argumentation was instead keyed to stakes in national language and culture. In that scenario the ends justify the means. So if commercial funding makes the public institution stronger, it must be utilised because such is perceived to be in Norway’s best interests (NRK, 2000: 7; and also Moe, 2003). Thus, while the BBC attacks foreign markets for the benefit of Britain the NRK defends its home land for the benefit of Norway.

To some extent these disparities boil down to differences in markets and economic potential. The BBC operates under more advantageous conditions. Not only is the domestic market ten times bigger and with a much wider range of potential customers, the possibilities for export are exceptional given that English is the language of international advantage. This applies both to the market for programme and content sales, and in consumer goods. The NRK lacks both a large home market and any serious potential for international sales outside the Nordic region. In this light similarities in strategies are all the more striking and the Norwegian broadcaster’s attitude towards commercial potential appears quite optimistic.

In contrast, the German organisations operate in a much larger language area. Not only does Germany have about fifteen times the population of Norway, there is also a substantial market in neighbouring countries. To a certain degree, the ARD and the ZDF leverage the size of these markets. The actual amount of licence fee income is high, profits from programme sales and co-productions are stable and substantial, and their share of the advertising market is also worth noting. Yet compared to the BBC and the NRK, their arguments and strategies are clearly less expansive and exploratory – which is not to say that this has always or even mostly been their preference. The development identified by Steemers (1998 and 2001) in the late 1990s has continued through 2007: The BBC has taken its commercial expansion further while the ARD and

the ZDF have stayed on their path of moderation. In all these cases, each PSB company has taken the path it was permitted to take, if not also encouraged to accept. As we will discuss later, the latitude of possibility is largely a product of domestic political culture. Thus, the gap between the German and British cases has grown.

The pressing question at this point, especially for PSB managers, is what such differences in strategies imply for the legitimacy of public service media.

Implications for public service legitimacy

To defend their privileges – funding schemas included – public service broadcasters must balance their need for legitimacy with respect to three different sets of actors. The first and foremost actor is the public. They are first and foremost because they use and pay for these services and must see the institution and its output as distinctive, independent and reliable – and therefore worthy of public funding. Secondly, and increasingly important, public service broadcasters need to secure legitimacy among their commercial competitors and partners. The industry must perceive the public institutions' activities as stable, predictable and reasonably regulated. Thirdly, legitimacy has a political dimension which depends on the extent to which the broadcasters' plans resonate in and for political policy.

Building on the four case companies in their respective contexts, we can now concentrate on the implications of different strategies for these three dimensions of legitimacy. I choose the character of debates about the licence fee to illustrate public broadcasters' public legitimacy. The role of the industry is scrutinised by looking at the level, form and force of protests against public service broadcasters' commercial activities. The third dimension is approached via discussion about the importance of political cultures for our understanding of the dynamics between strategies for funding and public media policy.

Licence fee debates: The legitimacy of PSM

Consensus remains strong to keep the NRK as a primarily publicly funded institution with the licence fee as the preferred arrangement. Other solutions have not been thoroughly debated despite the fact that two of the parties represented in Parliament have set abolishment of the licence fee as an aim: The Progress Party (*FrP*) favours commercial funding while the smaller Liberal party (*Venstre*) wants to turn the NRK into a post on the annual state budget. In principle current regulations do not rule out collecting licence fees from PC and mobile-phone owners. In 2005, the NRK even suggested this opening should be employed, partly building its argumentation on a newly passed decision in Denmark where a "media licence fee" was introduced (Mossin, 2006). Two subsequent coalition Governments have since rejected the idea without much debate or any formal treatment.

In fact, public debates on NRK funding have only emerged sporadically and have seldom touched on anything fundamental. At the time of writing, the latest debate originated in a 2006 plan to change the deadlines for collection of the licence fee to comply with accounting regulations. Depending on which side one chooses to believe, the quite complicated schema would either entail no burden for the public or result in several months of double payment (Alstad 2007; Gabrielsen & Vagstad, 2007). The debate largely involved economists and remained focused on practices of accountancy.

Given their limited possibilities for commercial expansion, a continuance of the licence fee is crucial for the ARD and the ZDF. On this basis a more fundamental debate has taken place: The issue of collecting licence fees from Internet-ready PCs and mobile phones. The question gave rise to substantial protests (Roth, 2006; Digital Fernsehen, 2006b), and a correspondingly lengthy political process. Despite opponents' claims that this is equivalent to "forcing deaf people to throw money in the street musician's hat" (Digital Fernsehen, 2006c), the licence fee on PC terminals was introduced in January 2007 at a third of the fee amount for television sets. The schema entails the potential risk of harming the legitimacy of licence fee funding, however the introduction led to an upsurge in publicity for "refuseniks" and also resulted in protests at the EU level (Bebenburg, 2007). Still, these public service broadcasters took an at least symbolically important step to validate the traditional licence fee system for new digital platforms.

In even starker contrast to Norway, public debates about alternatives to – and alternative uses of – the licence fee have been numerous and vigorous in the UK. The fact that the BBC itself has commissioned essays to debate the future funding of public service is illustrative. A recent example is a published collection titled *Can the Market Deliver?* (Helm et al., 2005). Ofcom (2007) is considering plans to establish a Public Service Publisher through which companies obliged to produce required programmes could direct their bids to what could amount to an expediter (cf. Peacock, 2004 and Graham, 2005 for the opposing arguments on this issue). Despite such initiatives, and a below-inflation fee agreement set in 2007, the licence fee remains the dominant source of income for the BBC. It will be so until 2016, according to the new 2007 Charter, but with an evaluation required after five years (BBC, 2006b). Initiatives to introduce a PC licence fee have been left stranded. The BBC holds television sets as "a valid basis on which to raise the licence fee" for another 15 years (BBC, 2004: 113).

For the NRK, the rare public debates about their funding schema have not dealt with essential issues. In the UK, on the other hand, much more is at risk; there have been massive public debates questioning the very legitimacy of the licence fee, and the BBC as its beneficiary. The German cases seem to find themselves in a middle position: Recent controversial developments have led to some public scrutiny of the licence fee, but the public funding schema has in the end been expanded and seems far from realistically threatened.

The Norwegian situation fits with the findings so far – the legitimacy of the NRK's licence fee funding seems to reflect the institution's generous leeway.

On the other hand, it is not equally easy to draw parallels regarding the other cases' situation: The BBC's tradition for emphasising separation of public and commercial parts has not insulated its funding scheme from public criticism. Despite a more moderate strategy, the German broadcasters meet stronger public protests than the NRK. To what extent is this mirrored by the industry?

Industry protests: Opposition to PSM commercial activities

For the NRK, liberal advertising rules on teletext and websites became a prime focus of attacks from competitors beginning in the late 1990s (Moe, 2003; also see Selsjord, 2006b). The commercial broadcaster TVNorge claimed it suffered a 750,000 loss of income. Similarly, when TV2 warned against a liberalisation of NRK regulations, teletext and Internet services were singled out as particularly damaging: They must therefore be free of advertising and fulfil the requirements of PSB. These protests prompted an examination of the schema by European Commission state aid authorities (Moe, forthcoming).

In the eyes of the British media industry, the BBC's legitimacy was dealt several blows in the course of preparations for the digital era. Early moves were particularly controversial. They were also, arguably, a bit shaky – even peripheral services like pub games and credit card authorisation were introduced in the early 1990s, services which clearly had little to do with broadcasting (Born, 2004: 59). Commercial competitors repeatedly objected to such, and later to new services (e.g. Sweney, 2006b; Cave et al., 2004; Gibson, 2004). They especially argue for a strong and visible link between each commercial service and the core PSB remit (Tryhorn, 2005). To help settle disputes and strengthen legitimacy, the draft for the new Charter proposed four criteria to guide the commercial activities of BBC Worldwide: 1) they must support or relate to the public service mission; 2) not jeopardise the good reputation of the BBC or its brand values; 3) exhibit commercial efficiency; and 4) comply with Fair Trading guidelines (BBC Worldwide, 2006b: 5).

In Germany, the industry's level of tolerance for commercial initiatives seems to correspond to the lowest level of formal freedom: The ARD and the ZDF have, for instance, been criticized for operating expensive call-in services connected to broadcast programmes (Hamann, 2004). A perceived lack of separation between commercial and public activity income streams have been another issue for objections. The lobby for national commercial broadcasters (VPRT) has been particularly active, both in public debates and in lodging formal complaints with regulatory authorities. Thus, a "pure" strategy has not meant an absence of industry opposition: The forms of protests and the arguments put forward by competing actors in Germany resemble those in the other cases.

PSM legitimacy among both competitors and partners concerns the actual character, scope and regulation of commercial activities. At the outset, the link between what the broadcasters do and are allowed to do, and the attitude of the industry, could be thought self evident. And yet the present cases indicate

how industrial legitimacy transcends national differences. A prominent similarity emerges across all three contexts: The cases have met corresponding criticism from the industry using nearly identical arguments and advancing clearly shared common interests. It is hard not to see the strong hand of globalization and commercial media lobbies at work here. This illustrates a general transnational front against any commercial expansion of public service operators (Mortensen, 2006: 76). However, the force of industry arguments, and their success in turning concerns into actual regulatory arrangements, has differed. These differences compel us to look at the issue of legitimacy in relation to the foundational dimension of political culture.

The importance of political cultures: PSM policy and strategy

As the analysis has shown, all four cases are perceived as legitimate in their respective political settings. They have each so far tackled the turmoil of digitalization without losing their fundamental status, or indeed their strong market positions. The interesting question, then, is not whether they are seen as legitimate by political actors but rather *how* they have so far kept their legitimacy despite markedly different strategies. Answering that requires examining political culture contexts.

Commercial expansion undertaken by the BBC from the late 1980s can be understood as an answer to political pressure to make the broadcaster more efficient. As part of the legacy of Thatcherism, the institution was explicitly given an industrial role and a leadership character (Born, 2004). The Blair government, it has been argued, followed a similar path (McGuigan, 2004). The NRK is also mandated to take a pioneering role in exploring new technologies and driving universal uptake. Yet it is regarded as an instrument for social and cultural policy and not, to the same extent, for industrial policy motives. Protection of language and culture has remained at the core of the Norwegian debate. The same policy field, but with different aims, marks the German debate where the role of public opinion formation necessary for a robust democratic process is the keen focus. So the source of policy legitimising PSB, and the policy objectives inscribing the parameters for PSM, vary as a function of more general aims characteristic of political culture and policy ambitions in the three respective states where these companies are located.

Liberal political systems as in Britain have traditionally championed political neutrality in broadcasting. The BBC's model of governance sets out to protect the public service broadcaster from political control by having the professionals run the operation instead of politicians having management control (Hallin & Mancini, 2004: 31). Guided by an ideal freedom, media policy in general is advancing self-regulation, and so all state intervention must be thoroughly, even painstakingly, legitimised (Vowe, 1999: 405). Compared to other liberal systems, especially American and Australian, the UK stands out with a legacy of conservative statism combined with a historically very strong labour movement. Both these factors modify the liberal tradition's imprint on the political culture.

As noted by the BBC (2004: 16), both Conservative and Labour governments have encouraged the corporation to pursue global commercial interests while remaining a strong public service provider at home. As long as this division remains potent, and the market impact of publicly funded interference is transparently accounted for, the BBC has been able to keep its dual strategy and maintain legitimacy in the eyes of its political governors.

In Norway, the politicians who hail the NRK as a mainly non-commercial broadcaster simultaneously approve an expansive strategy, thus far without much emphasis on any rigid division between the two aims. This somewhat contradictory situation can be understood with reference to a social democratic political culture. Geared towards equality as a social priority, its media policy should involve as many actors as possible in the decision processes to secure consensus and equal opportunities for all (Vowe, 1999). The system has a markedly more elaborate legislative process compared with Britain. Further, there is by tradition high tolerance for state subsidies of a strong national actor because the small language area corresponds to a market deemed too limited for robust commercial initiatives (Moe, forthcoming). This partly explains the NRK's status and has lent force to the company's optimistic plans. Since the introduction of commercial broadcasting some fifteen years ago, the overall regulatory process has favoured a liberalised NRK (Moe, 2003).

German media policy, in contrast, generally provides greater liberties for private ownership and is geared towards securing a blooming private sector (Hallin & Mancini, 2004: 71). On the other hand, the German Constitutional Court's decisions have been fundamental for the development of the nation's broadcasting sector. The Court has repeatedly stressed the importance of publicly funded broadcasting's functions for democratic government and public opinion formation (see Humphreys, 1994 and also Lucht, 2006; Porter & Hasselbach, 1991). As illustrated, such was also the case when the foundation was laid for strategies to handle digitalization. This role further implies a defence of the ARD and the ZDF as traditional public institutions, but without expansion into commercial areas. Here legitimacy is clearly tied to counterbalancing marketization. In a sense, then, industrial policy arguments work against PSB efforts in Germany to achieve PSM success, and this is in stark contrast with the BBC. German public service providers are restricted from pursuing an expansive strategy and commercial revenues because all of that is so far reserved for private sector companies.

The leitmotif of security is deeply rooted in Germany's political culture. Media policy is expected to provide clear rules with specific possibilities for sanctions. It is in effect a conservative policy (Vowe, 1999). In the specific governance of public broadcasting, authority is assigned beyond the political party system and divided among diverse social or political groups (Hallin & Mancini, 2004: 31). The broadcasting system's federal structure means, moreover, that every regional ARD member organization must deal with often differing political conditions coloured by local politics. The states (*Länder*) have a long history of competing among themselves to attract industry, including private broad-

casters. They typically do this on the basis of offering favourable economic conditions. Since the 1980s this has taken the form of “a pattern of competitive deregulations” by the states (Humphreys, 1994: 242). Despite operating a nationwide service, the ZDF is also subject to this regulatory schema. As a result, both organizations have had to do without the strong, unified support from a national government enjoyed by the other case countries.

Striving to retain legitimacy, public service broadcasters thus remain reliant on the specific national political culture at home. The case of ZDF clearly shows how national variables can create crippling constraints. Many of this German institution’s commercial initiatives have been left stranded following regulatory processes initiated by public criticism or industry protests (more often the latter than the former). In contrast, the BBC’s strategy is perceived as quite legitimate because of, and not despite, its commercial explorations (and exploitations). Similarly, the legitimacy of the NRK seems based on the institution’s ability to utilise commercial potential, and to make use of new technology without emphasis on dissociation from arrangements that promote enclosure.

Though the link between funding strategies and public service policy is still to a large degree shaped by national characteristics, two generalizable points should be noted. First, a “pure” strategy that clearly advances traditional public service values of open access and universality does strengthen the legitimacy of public broadcasting on a general level even if it limits certain development potential. This makes it rather easy to see how publicly funded offers stand out, and that is important. But while industry protests seem to be independent of a broadcaster’s actual strategy, the impact of protest is by no means independent of that: A “pure” strategy does diminish the political force of industry complaints.

Second, following the EU’s ongoing assessment of Norwegian policy which originated in industry complaints, a 2007 white paper is set to define more clearly the do’s and don’ts of the NRK. Consequently, while the Norwegian case has stood out following several years of relatively generous leeway, this may change. A parallel process in Germany led the EU to demand clearer separation between commercial and public funds, i.e. greater transparency (EC, 2007). This is an increasingly evident trend. These two points should be taken in counterweight against any perspective too focused on purely national explanatory factors.

Conclusion

As public service design and operation move beyond broadcasting to also include new media platforms, dimensions related to concrete historical developments, market characteristics, and political cultures will define similarities and uniqueness in different institutional developments. I have argued that the analysed cases presented here represent a continuum. On the one end we have the NRK’s optimistically expansive strategy wherein commercially and publicly

funded services are not always clearly separated. Also, the institution has made several provisions that promote enclosure, especially on new media platforms – and all of this with political consent. On the other hand, the ARD and the ZDF find themselves in a relatively stable regulatory situation albeit with strict constraints on commercial initiatives. In response to the restrictive situation the German PSB operators have portrayed themselves as clearly opposed to *any* form of enclosure. Located between these comparative extremes is the BBC. Despite recent deviations that might entail future problems with enclosure, the institution seeks to balance a far-reaching international commercial arm with domestic public service tasks – and is encouraged to do so. It will be important to situate other European contexts and public service providers along this continuum in order to find more similarities and differences, and also especially to more deeply excavate the reasons explaining both.

I have further argued in contrast with some opinions that traditional practices of media policy do not suddenly change in the digital era. Rather, conditions facing new platforms have to a large extent been defined within well-established historical frameworks and are dependent on the conditioned legacies of each state's political culture in quite broad terms. Consequently, as public broadcasters seek to keep their legitimacy in a digital era both strategies and arguments, and the level of political support, need be understood with due attention to national characteristics. There is little that could be more useful for PSB strategic managers today than deep assessment of the legacies, conditions, continuities and dynamics of domestic political culture. That really does establish and define the latitude of possibility.

The German situation is far from universally applicable and we should not expect institutions across Europe to mirror the strategies of the ARD and the ZDF. But the role ascribed to and taken by these broadcasters has important advantages that critics seem to often overlook. The situation there does clearly emphasise the traditional core public service values of universality and open access, and in doing so demonstrates trade-offs that are probably inherent in securing stability. At the same time, however, that stability very much depends on a shared affirmation (to date) of the crucial importance of PSB's basic value even in the digital environment. I have stressed how national characteristics impinge on the broadcasters' possibilities. But even so, as public broadcasters across Europe strive to renew their remit beyond broadcasting the core values and traditional ethos underlined by a "pure" strategy are keenly valuable and still worthy of protection and imitation.

Notes

1. Norway is bound by all relevant EU regulations and policy decisions pursuant to The European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement.
2. I have taken a cue from Arend Lijphart (1971) on how to avoid a basic difficulty with qualitative comparative research: the "many variables, small N" problem. One way around it is to select "comparable" cases – meaning cases that are "similar in a large number of important

characteristics (variables) which one wants to treat as constants, but dissimilar as far as those variables are concerned which the researcher wants to relate to each other” (Lijphart, 1971: 687). The anticipated result should allow the researcher to establish relationships among relatively few variables, while many others are being controlled.

3. The NRK is authorised to pursue broadcasting activities according to the Norwegian Broadcasting Act. Its main services comprise two television channels (with auxiliary ones being introduced late 2007) and three radio channels. The national market is made up of the country's population of about 4 million. TV2 and P4 were rewarded nationwide licences to broadcast advertising funded public service television and radio in 1992 and 1993, respectively.
4. Commercial activities existed also prior to this date, but on a much smaller scale. NRK Aktivum initiated several controversial projects before settling on four main areas: programme sales, interactive services, consumer goods (mainly via a web store on nrk.no) and events (Strømmen, 1999: 82; NRK Aktivum, 2006).
5. The BBC, which faced competition already in 1955 from advertising funded ITV, grounds its operation in a Charter with the state, and offers four main television and five main radio channels. The home market includes viewers in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – together a population of around 60 millions.
6. After the Second World War, broadcasting policy in West Germany was delegated to the different states (*Länder*). The states now form nine public broadcasters, offering regional radio and television channels. Together they constitute the ARD, which provides altogether nearly 40 regional radio channels, one main nationwide and 5 auxiliary television channels. The ZDF, formed in 1961, offers one main national and several additional television channels. Both organizations find their formal grounding in the Constitutional Court's interpretation of the *Basic Law* of 1949. What has become Europe's most competitive television market is made up of the German population of over 80 millions.
7. A 1986 Constitutional Court intervention was decisive in setting the balance: the public organizations were to remain the foundation of German broadcasting, and continue to provide a so-called basic service (Humphreys, 1994: 255ff).
8. The ZDF felt it needed a new form of audience contact to make up for its lack of a radio service. This argument has also been used for their proactive online strategy (Eberle, 2003: 1), and been put forward more generally as an explanation for their willingness to push for alternative means of funding and partnerships (Steemers, 2001: 78).
9. The ban was implemented in the inter-state treaty (*Rundfunk-Staatsvertrag*) that regulates the public broadcasters' field of activities in 2000 (cf. Moe, forthcoming).
10. Digitalization of the terrestrial television network is undertaken by a commercial company – Norges Televisjon – jointly owned by the NRK, TV2 and privatized state telecom Telenor. A separate company (RiksTV) with the same owners will run a pay-tv service on the platform.
11. The argument does have some relevance, as illustrated by a recent case where a local internet service provider (ISP) set a max limit for transfers from NRK-servers to end-users, since the institution's popular web-tv-offer clogged the ISP's network (Lorensen, 2006). The ISP demanded that the NRK should pay for the needed extra capacity. Though the dispute was settled, the result was a temporarily poorer service from the public broadcaster, and an illustrative test of emerging problems with network neutrality.
12. The pilot was closed down in October 2006 to await formal approval.
13. As the name signals, BBC Worldwide primarily directs its attention abroad. This also applied to its predecessor BBC Enterprises, which tellingly was suggested to be named BBC International (Briggs, 1995: 713). In 2007, domestic commercial services are sold under different brands (e.g. UKTV), while free services are either offered exclusively for UK audiences, or for foreign users with additional advertising exposure (e.g. planned internet services, including BBC-branded channels on YouTube) or as pay-services (e.g. IPTV for US customers).

References

- Alstad, T.E. (2007) Lisens eller lån? *Dagens Næringsliv*, 03.01, p.51.
- ARD (2006) *ARD Jahrbuch 06*. Hamburg: Hans-Bredow-Institut.
- ARD and ZDF (2006a) Antworten Von ARD Und ZDF Zur Sog., Grundverschlüsselung, *Media Perspektiven* (6), pp.337-41.
- ARD and ZDF (2006b) *Questionnaire – Public Consultation on Content Online in the Single Market*. (No date).
- BBC (1998) *BBC Declares its Public Purposes for the New Millennium*. Press release, 03.12.
- BBC (2004) *Building Public Value – Renewing the BBC for a Digital World*. London: BBC.
- BBC (2006a) *Creative Archive*. <http://creativearchive.bbc.co.uk> (accessed 24.07.07)
- BBC (2006b) *BBC Royal Charter*. http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/regulatory_framework/charter_agreement/royalchartersealed_sept06.pdf (accessed 24.07.07).
- BBC (2006c) *Annual Report and Accounts 2005/2006*. http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/review_report_research/bbcannualreport.pdf (accessed 24.07.07).
- BBC Worldwide (2006a) *BBC Magazines – Magazines for Life*. www.bbcmagazines.com (accessed 24.07.07).
- BBC Worldwide (2006b) *Annual Review 2005/06*. <http://www.bbcworldwide.com/annualreviews/review2006/default.htm> (accessed 24.07.07).
- Bebenburg, P.V. (2007) Horrozahlen. *Frankfurter Rundschau*. http://www.fr-online.de/in_und_ausland/kultur_und_medien/feuilleton/?sid=779c67249b189991467b0c26114474ab&em_cnt=1113122 (accessed 16.04.07).
- Bernander, J. (2005) NRK, Pioneer. *Diffusion Online* (45).
- Bernander, J. (2006) TV-seere som kunder. *Dagens Næringsliv*, 18.04, p.54.
- Born, G. (2004) *Uncertain Vision – Birt, Dyke and the Reinvention of the BBC*. London: Secker & Warburg.
- Briggs, A. (1995) *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom: Volume V – Competition*. Oxford University Press.
- Brockmeyer, D. and Erling E. (1999) *Die Digitale Wende – Der K(r)ampf um das Deutsche Fernsehen*. Hamburg: Infodienst Verlag.
- Conlan, T. (2007) BBC Trust Defers Web Ad Decision. *MediaGuardian*. <http://media.guardian.co.uk/newmedia/story/0,,2018995,00.html> (accessed 24.07.07).
- Cave, M., Collins, R. and Crowther, P. (2004) Regulating the BBC. *Telecommunications Policy* 28(3-4), pp.249-272.
- Digital Fernsehen (2006a) ARD und ZDF Werden frei zu sehen sein. www.digitalfernsehen.de/news/news_99607.html (accessed 24.07.07).
- Digital Fernsehen (2006b) ARD: Verständnis für Proteste gegen PC-Gebühr. www.digitalfernsehen.de/news/news_83212.html (accessed 24.07.07).
- Digital Fernsehen (2006c) "Politiker gegen gebühren für PCs und Handys. www.digitalfernsehen.de/news/news_107951.html (accessed 24.07.07).
- Eberle, C.E. (2003) Formen der Finanzierung öffentlich-rechlicher Online-Angebot". *Arbeitspapiere des Instituts für Rundfunkökonomie an der Universität zu Köln*, heft 178.
- EC (2007) *State Aid: Commission Closes Investigation Regarding the Financing Regime for German Public Service Broadcasters*. IP/07/543.
- Eckblad, B. and Selsjord, K. (2005) Provosert av Telenor. *Dagens Næringsliv*, 16.11, pp.52-53.
- Gabrielsen, T.S. and Vagstad, S. (2007) Noe mer enn en regnskapsteknisk endring? *Dagens Næringsliv*, 11.01, p.63.
- Gibson, O. (2004) UKTV Launches Set to Raise Hackles. *MediaGuardian*. <http://media.guardian.co.uk/digitaltv/story/0,,1140206,00.html> (accessed 24.07.07).
- Golem Forum (2005) ARD will Handy-Fernsehen anbieten www.golem.de/0511/41932.html (accessed 24.07.07).
- Gounalakis, G. (2000) *Funktionsauftrag und Wirtschaftliche Betätigung des Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen*. ZDF Schriftenreihe 59. Mainz: ZDF.

- Graham, A. (2005) 'It's the Ecology, Stupid'. In *Can the Market Deliver? Funding Public Service Television in the Digital Age*. Eastleigh: John Libbey.
- Gram, T. (2001) NRK Satser på utdanning. *Propaganda*. www.propaganda-as.no/tekst.cfm?id=34233 (accessed 24.07.07).
- Hallin, D. and Mancini, P. (2004) *Comparing Media Systems – Three Models of Media and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hamann, G. (2004) Im Fadenkreuz der EU. *Die Zeit*. www.zeit.de/2004/32/EU-ARD-ZDF (accessed 24.07.07).
- Helm, D. et al. (2005) *Can the Market Deliver? Funding Public Service Television in the Digital Age*. Eastleigh, UK: John Libbey.
- Holtz-Bacha, C. (2003) Of Markets and Supply: Public Broadcasting in Germany. In Lowe, G.F. and Hujanen, T. (eds.) *Broadcasting & Convergence: New Articulations of the Public Service Remit*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- Holtz-Bacha, C. (2006) *Medienpolitik für Europa*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Humphreys, P.J. (1994) *Media and Media Policy in Germany – The Press and Broadcasting Since 1945*, Second revised edition. Oxford, Providence: Berg Publishers.
- Jakubowicz, K. (2004) A Square Peg in a Round Hole: The EU's Policy on Public Service Broadcasting. In Bondebjerg, I. and Golding, P. (eds.) *European Culture and the Media*. Bristol: Intellect Books.
- Kelly, L. (2006) BBC and Microsoft Sign Internet Agreement, *Computing*. www.computing.co.uk/computing/news/2165349/bbc-microsoft-sign-internet (accessed 24.07.07).
- Kibar, O. (2006) NRK Tror på Nedlastbar TV, *Dagens Næringsliv*, 21.03, p.53.
- Lijphart, A. (1971) Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method. *The American Political Science Review*, 65(3), pp.682-93.
- Lorentsen, A. (2006) NextGenTel Føyer NRK, *ITavisen*. <http://www.itavisen.no/php/art.php?id=341806> (accessed 24.07.07).
- Lowe, G.F. and Hujanen, T. (2003) *Broadcasting & Convergence: New Articulations of the Public Service Remit*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- Lucht, J. (2006) *Der Öffentlich-Rechtliche Rundfunk: Ein Auflaufsmodell? Grundlagen – Analysen – Perspektiven*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.
- MCCA (2004) *Vedtekter for NRK AS*. <http://www.sprakrad.no/upload/3183/NRK-vedtekter.pdf> (accessed 24.07.07).
- McGuigan, J. (2004) *Rethinking Cultural Policy*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Moe, H. (2003) *Digitaliseringen av Fjernsyn og Allmennkringkastingens Skjebne*. Department of Media Studies, University of Bergen, Norway.
- Moe, H. (forthcoming). Public Service Online? Regulating Public Broadcasters' Internet Services – a Comparative Analysis. *Television & New Media*.
- Mortensen, F. (2006) Catch 22: The Privatization of Danish TV2 vs. EU Rules on State Aid. *Mediekultur* 9(2), pp.74-83.
- Mossin, B.Å. (2006) NRK vil ha Avgift på PC og Mobiltelefon. *Journalisten* (11), pp.8-9.
- NRK (1995) *Tidssignalet*, Ekstranummer juni. Oslo: NRK. NRK (2000) *Tidssignalet*, no. 18. Oslo: NRK.
- NRK (2006) *Årsregnskap 2005*. Oslo: NRK.
- NRK Aktivum (2006) *Et Bredt Spekter av Varer og Tjenester*. www.nrk.no/informasjon/organisasjonen/nrk_aktivum/2733537.html (accessed 24.07.07). Ofcom (2007). *A New Approach to Public Service Content in the Digital Age*, London: Ofcom.
- Peacock, A. (2004) *Public Service Broadcasting Without the BBC?* London: The Institute of Economic Affairs.
- Porter, V. and Hasselbach, S. (1991) *Pluralism, Politics and the Marketplace – The Regulation of German Broadcasting*. London: Routledge.
- Roth, W.D. (2006) Was Zahlt Man ARD und ZDF ab 2007 für den Zugang zum Internet? *Telepolis*. www.heise.de/tp/r4/artikel/22/22640/1.html (accessed 10.10.06).

- Salmen, V. I. (2006) Kapituliert Wird Nicht. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/wirtschaft/artikel/990/88902/> (accessed 24.07.07).
- Selsjord, K. (2006a) Noe For Alle – Mot Betaling. *Dagens Næringsliv*, 08.09, p.60.
- Selsjord, K. (2006b) Støtter Betal-NRK. *Dagens Næringsliv*, 09.09, p.118.
- Sheppard, F. (2006) BBC to Give Internet Users Access to its Vast TV Archive. *The Scotsman*. <http://news.scotsman.com/uk.cfm?id=1188312006> (accessed 24.07.07).
- Sivertsen, M. (2007) NRK-Regler Avleggs. *NA24*. <http://www.na24.no/propaganda/media/article928419.ece> (accessed 24.07.07)
- Steemers, J. (1998) On the Threshold of the 'Digital Age': Prospects for Public Service Broadcasting. In Steemers, J. (ed.) *Changing Channels: The Prospects for Television in a Digital World*. Luton: University of Luton Press.
- Steemers, J. (2001) In Search of a Third Way: Balancing Public Purpose and Commerce in German and British Public Service Broadcasting. *Canadian Journal of Communication* 26(1), pp.69-87.
- Steemers, J. (2005) Balancing Culture and Commerce on the Global Stage – BBC Worldwide. In Lowe, G. F. and Jauert, P. (eds.) *Cultural Dilemmas in Public Service Broadcasting*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- Strømmen, N.P. (1999) *Forretninger i Allmennhetens Tjeneste – En Analyse av Sekundæraktivitetene i NRK*. Department of Media and Communication, University of Oslo, Norway.
- Sweney, M. (2006a) BBC Could Make £100 m from Online Ads. *MediaGuardian*. <http://media.guardian.co.uk/broadcast/story/0,,1933645,00.html> (accessed 24.07.07).
- Sweney, M. (2006b) Highfield Defends BBC Online. *MediaGuardian*. <http://media.guardian.co.uk/newmedia/story/0,,1796712,00.html> (accessed 24.07.07).
- Tryhorn, C. (2005) BBC May Have to Sell More Magazines. *MediaGuardian*. <http://media.guardian.co.uk/broadcast/story/0,,1428705,00.html> (accessed 24.07.07).
- Tryhorn, C. (2007) BBC Trust Gives Nod to Freesat. *MediaGuardian*. <http://media.guardian.co.uk/broadcast/story/0,,2022589,00.html> (accessed 24.07.07).
- Vowe, G. (1999) Medienpolitik Zwischen Freiheit, Gleichheit und Sicherheit. *Publizistik*, 44(4), pp.395-415.
- Ward, D. (2003) State Aid or Band Aid? An Evaluation of the European Commission's Approach to Public Service Broadcasting. *Media, Culture & Society*, 25(2), pp.233-255.
- Wekre, H. (2006) NRK-serie blir temapark. *Kampanje*. www.kampanje.com/markedsf_ring/article40282.ece (accessed 24.07.07)
- Zervos, F. (2003) *Digitales Fernsehen in Deutschland – Medienpolitische und Medienwirtschaftliche Herausforderungen des Zukünftigen Fernsehens*. Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- ZDF (2005) *ZDF Jahrbuch 2005*. www.zdf-jahrbuch.de/2005/index.html (accessed 24.07.07).

Public Service Media Dilemmas and Regulation in a Converging Media Landscape

Andra Leurdijk

In a media landscape with an abundance of digital channels, new services and personalised content, public service broadcasting [PSB] is under constant pressure to legitimise its public funding and redefine its remit. The rationales for PSB have remained relatively unchanged: contributing to diversity and quality in broadcasting, providing universal access to independent information, offering a platform for debate, and contributing to national culture and identity. Such are still among the most common objectives for PSBs in Europe. However the way in which these objectives are realised is shifting as PSBs expand their activities into digital platforms. They have launched digital thematic television and radio channels, already offer a range of online services, and some are even involved in online gaming and mobile services. From being 'just' broadcasters they are gradually transitioning to be providers and aggregators of public value content for diverse and digital platforms.

Some of these services are very popular, such as the BBCs websites or the Dutch delay-TV service. But PSB activities in the digital domain have met with criticism from various angles. Some claim that PSB has responded too slowly or inadequately to new opportunities in a digital and networked world. They claim hierarchical and rigid production routines, segmented work style and traditional professional ethics do not fit the anarchistic and hybrid Internet culture. On the other end of the critical spectrum are those that think PSB endeavours in the digital domain are too extensive. PSBs are accused of unfair competition by cross subsidising new services with public funds and distorting markets by offering services that commercial companies could provide had not PSB already settled the territory. In an era of information abundance, state support and public financing for PSB are increasingly contested.

Notwithstanding these pressures, and partly in response to them, European PSBs have crafted a particular space for themselves in the digital domain. In this chapter I advance arguments that favour a prominent place for public service media [PSM] in the digital domain. Although I cannot provide a definite answer about the scope and remit for PSM in the digital domain given national differences, I underscore crucial aspects for consideration and areas for investigation

by media researchers as well as regulators and governments. The objective is to assess what public values are at stake in the emerging digital markets. This chapter contributes to the debate by analysing some of the distinguishing characteristics of current PSB contributions in the digital domain. In providing an analysis of two exemplary case studies I work to develop relevant dimensions in which one can assess public values in current digital media and Internet offerings. This chapter deals with the question of how PSBs and regulators (re)define the nature and scope of the public service remit in a digital media environment.

The substantive emphasis addresses four dilemmas of decisive importance to PS in this domain.

A typology of PSB digital services

In the 1990s PSB companies took their first steps into the digital world by launching web pages offering additional information about their television programmes and on-air personalities. Gradually their Internet activities evolved into websites with more extensive news and background information, added services (e.g., consumer tests, pop charts, fan clubs and games) and links to related content, as well as possibilities to communicate with programme makers and other viewers on discussion lists or in chat rooms.

The next step in the digital domain, from the mid nineties on, was the development of new digital radio and television channels, often thematic and targeted to narrower but still rather broad audiences. In the early years of the new century they also began experimenting with a variety of interactive services. The BBC is one of the first and still most active public players in this field. Initially interactive services were limited to simple forms such as voting for contestants in televised competitions or sending text messages (SMS) to game shows. More recently complex and extended forms of interactivity are offered by PSBs. Examples include BBC sports events such as Wimbledon (2001) and the Interactive Olympics (2004) where viewers could choose among different matches and camera angles. PSB companies also increasingly offer their programmes via streaming audio and video signals accessed via web archives for delayed viewing.

These new digital services require different ways of organising the internal workflow. PSB companies are working, for example, to integrate previously segmented radio, television, Internet and teletext channels, and are adopting cross media production strategies. This implies that the production process does not start with the development of a single television or radio programme as in the previous regime, but rather begins with a core idea or concept that is subsequently elaborated, produced and exploited in different formats for different platforms. The BBC calls this “360 Degree Commissioning”. Handling this requires a very different work process, work culture and mentality; one

that traditional employees trained as television or radio makers have not all fully embraced, if even rightly understood as yet.

This brief overview of PSB activities indicates that PSBs have been quite ambitious in their attempts to retain a prominent position in the rapidly emerging digital media landscape.

Scope and financing of PSB's digital media services

PSBs increasingly formulate their mission statements in a platform neutral way based on a mission to bring their content to the public wherever that public goes and in whatever way it finds most suitable.¹ On that basis, national governments in Europe have generally allowed PSBs to expand into the digital domain. That is certainly evident in Britain and Denmark where PSB is encouraged to develop new services. In other cases, such as Germany, it is very sticky and difficult for PSB to launch new media services. So the picture is uneven but in general the trend is towards official support for launching new prospects. In most countries, however, new services are subject to stricter conditions concerning the nature, financing and scope of their services, compared with core radio and television activities.²

Media law in most European countries stipulates that PSB company investments in new services should be associated with their core services in traditional broadcasting and not 'cannibalize' on these services. In addition, PSBs must often undergo specified procedures to secure approval before they are allowed to start or, in some cases, even to continue digital services. In the renegotiated BBC Charter that took effect on 1 January 2007 digital and online activities are explicitly acknowledged as being part of the BBC's public service remit.³ Before implementation, however, all BBC new services should have their own, rather specific remit and must undergo a public value test that assesses the services' value for the public *and* the expected impact on the market. Securing permission may depend on additional requirements, for instance providing a certain amount of investment in new and original content, as was the case with the approval of BBC's youth channel, BBC3.

German legislation requires new services to be related to PSB broadcasting activities. In April 2005 this requirement became stricter; services should be *directly* related; it is no longer sufficient that they be predominantly related. Financially the budget for online services is set at a maximum of 0,75% of the core budget and the total number of digital channels cannot exceed the present number of six ARD and ZDF channels.

In Flanders the VRT can only start new digital channels when explicitly mandated in the four-year Management Agreement between the VRT and the Flemish government, or in an addendum between agreement negotiation periods. In Sweden the licence fee can only be used for new services related to PSB's core activities and may not cannibalize on existing television channels. For new digital channels SVT needs government approval. In the Netherlands

digital services should be related to the core broadcasting activities and require separate accounting and approval from the media regulator, although there are proposals to change this to give PSB more freedom in setting up new services.

Not only are there legal limitations in the scope of PSB activities in the digital domain, but funding for digital activities is still quite modest compared to the budgets for television and radio in these companies. Generally, PSBs have not received much or any extra money for digital services; indeed, in many countries they have suffered overall budget cuts while at the same time working to develop such services. As a result, investment is necessarily limited to a small percentage of overall funding for core broadcasting activities, ranging from one to seven percent of their total budgets (Leurdijk, 2005b & 2005c).⁴

Although in the long run digitization can diminish costs for storage, distribution and production, it also produces extra costs for investment in digitalising, preserving and storing archive material, clearing copyrights, acquiring or upgrading software systems, and bandwidth for hosting services. Many PSBs are therefore looking for additional sources of income to finance their digital services. Among the potential sources are 1) advertising, 2) requiring users to pay for digital archive material or high quality versions of streaming services, 3) revenue sharing deals with telecom providers for text messaging traffic, and 4) deals with network operators for offering extra digital channels. Co-production 5) with commercial firms and outsourcing are also evident, which in practice work to grow resources by lowering in-house costs. Some of these options are controversial, such as the idea of charging end users additional fees for publicly funded services, and may well damage popular support for PSM. Introducing advertising is also controversial in political debate and industrial markets, as is offering new services for free. These can be challenged as unfair competition. Generally speaking PSBs are therefore limited in their options to generate extra income.

Not only are there restrictions on the remit, scope and financing of PSB's digital and Internet activities, they are also contested on a more fundamental level. In his analysis of Australian broadcasting policies, Flew (2006) thought the public interest might be better served in the digital media domain if traditional policies safeguarding the national interest of institutions would be replaced by policies geared towards opening markets to even more competition. Quite a few EU policy documents and OECD reports tend towards this line of thinking.⁵

In addition, government support for a single institution that is supposed to cater for vulnerable productions and offer public value to a general (mass) audience is said to have become less vital and more unsuited given new patterns in content production and consumption characteristic of the digital and Internet economy. Anderson's theory about 'the long tail' (2006) contributes to an understanding that market structures have changed fundamentally in signalling less need for large organisations because there is reduced need for heavy investments, mass production and distribution. Anderson suggests that on the web even the most marginal productions can find an audience. On the web

there are no physical limitations like spectrum scarcity or limited shelf space, so back catalogues and niche programmes have a relatively unlimited timeframe to build an audience. When storage and distribution costs are insignificant it becomes economically viable to sell relatively unpopular products. All these niche markets taken together generate as many users and viewers, as the mass markets for the best sellers, blockbusters and popular television shows that are required to sustain viable media markets in the 'old' media economy. However several authors (Harrison & Wessels, 2005; Born, 2003; Steemers, 1999) have underlined that there is still an important role for PSBs in the digital domain because PSBs still offer distinctive services that are not offered in the same way by commercial companies. The two case studies that follow serve to support this line of thought.⁶

Case studies: BBC Creative Archive and Vara Comedy

The two selected case studies are BBC Creative Archive and Vara Comedy.⁷ Both are rich examples of digital offerings by PSBs that represent many of the typical characteristics of PSB online offerings. The BBC's Creative Archive is one of the first attempts to open PSB audiovisual archives to the audience and link to an important Internet trend in which consumers are also producers and distributors of content; the so-called 'prosumer'. Vara's Comedy, offered by one of the Dutch PSB associations, is an example of how a PSB in a small European country is attempting to develop into a cross media organisation and develop a digital offer in a very culturally specific genre for part of its national audience. These cases illustrate how PSBs are exploring new digital possibilities in response to three important trends in media markets: 1) the exploitation of archive material, 2) cross media production, and 3) offering a platform for user generated content. Other examples of digital and online offerings from European PSBs are of course available but outside the scope of this study. Most of them should, however, expect to encounter similar dilemmas. In this respect the chosen case studies are exemplary.

BBC Creative Archive: Short description

In April 2005 the BBC launched a pilot version of the BBC Creative Archive offering free access to selected and legally cleared BBC television and radio programmes. Users were able to search, preview, download (in non-broadcast quality) and modify (extracts of) programmes. They could use this material for class room presentations, personal projects or other non commercial uses. They could also share their creations with others on a non-commercial basis. Users had access to 500-600 video clips in total. At the core of the Creative Archive project is the Creative Archive Licence, inspired by the Creative Commons movement. The Creative Archive Licence recognises and preserves copyrights but releases the opportunity to engage in non-commercial sharing and the

integration of this material in personal, creative ‘derived works’. Commercial use is prohibited and users must share their own content on the same terms. At the end of the pilot in October 2006 the service went through a public value test, commissioned by the BBC Board of Governors (now the BBC Trust). The outcome of this test was not yet known at the time of this writing. During the review the BBC Creative Archive was closed, but general information about the pilot is still available (www.bbc.co.uk).

The Creative Archive Licence was launched by the BBC together with public and private partners including Channel 4, the British Film Institute, and the Open University. Since its launch, Teachers’ television, the Community Channel, The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council and ITN Source (formerly ITN News Archive) have joined the Creative Archive Licence Group. It will be interesting to see how end-users will utilise the material in the BBC’s Creative Archive, if continued subsequent to review. The pilot offer is a starting point from which other uses and models could be developed. If continued, the BBC plans to also make available archive material in fiction content.

Vara Comedy: Short description

Vara Comedy is the brand name under which Vara, one of the Dutch public broadcasting associations, aims to offer all comedy programmes and other comedy content to the public. Comedy is one of Vara’s key genres and central to its brand. It now tries to exploit this content in different media and on different platforms. On its open channel Vara broadcasts live and recorded comedy shows. On its digital thematic comedy channel (Humor TV) Vara recycles archive content and intends to begin producing some low cost, original content in the future. The Comedy web portal (<http://variatee.vara.nl/>) offers access to over 40 hours of archive material in the form of 3-5 minute comedy clips. The clips can be rated and viewers can suggest including material not yet on the site. The site also offers comedians’ biographies. In addition, Vara offers an online comedy magazine (Greinz.nl), produces comedy clips for mobile devices, and organises real life events such as comedy battles between schools. The digital channels and the live events are used as a platform for young talent. Vara intends to scout young talent and invite them to produce low cost short films for the digital channel. If successful they can move to the other platforms (web portal, open channel). There will also be space for user generated content within Vara’s comedy offer. The way in which Vara attempts to exploit its comedy content is evidence of how the association is reorganising its production processes to become a fully cross media organisation.

Dilemmas for PSB in the digital domain

The analysis of BBC’s Creative Archive and Vara’s Comedy offer led to the identification of a number of dilemmas for PSM in the digital domain. Most issues

not only affect Vara and the BBC but are relevant more generally, although of course their importance and impact will vary as a function of context. Some of the issues emerge from PSB's special position as a publicly funded body with a particular remit and certain obligations, often including restrictions in its operations on the market. Some issues spring from their position as traditional media companies that must find their way into a new digital and online world where the rules of the game are very different compared with the traditional past, thus requiring different relations with partners, competitors and audiences.

PSB dilemma 1: Competition for the exploitation of copyrights

One of the main PSB assets is large audiovisual archives that can be exploited online and through digital channels. When programmes are made in-house, copyrights are in most cases held by the broadcaster. But this is less often the case for all the underlying copyrights, i.e. the rights to elements that are 'inputs' for the final programme as a whole. Such underlying copyrights include music, décors, and performing artists. These copyrights usually remain with the artists. Contracts with underlying copyright holders have until recently only included the rights to a first screening and a few repeats on free-to-air channels. They have not included rights for online exploitation or for digital channels and video-on-demand services. Copyright issues thus present a major bottleneck (and headache) for broadcasters with archives to exploit.

Moreover, sorting out all the different provisions in copyright contracts, as well as clearing those copyrights, requires considerable investments in time and money. Even when the exploitation of content on other platforms is included in contracts, this often takes different forms and there are conflicting interests between stakeholders. This is particularly the case for content commissioned by broadcasters to independent television producers and for recordings in the performing arts (theatre, music, dance, etc.). Some content genres, especially in sports and film as well as entertainment fare including comedy, humour and satire, are highly exploitable content areas. Artists are often reluctant to give away or even to sell copyrights beyond a first broadcast exposure, and one or two repeats, on free-to-air television channels. Artists today think they can exploit the content themselves, or are afraid that online exposure or extra broadcasts on digital channels will cannibalize the number of visitors attending live performances. They fear that recycling their shows on digital channels reduces their market value.⁸

When the copyrights have remained with independent production companies issues are even more complicated because production companies can also consider exploiting popular programmes in collaboration with, for instance, network operators, other platform or portal owners, or via launching their own distribution channels on the Internet. Distribution scarcity has diminished and television producers are no longer as dependent on channel owners to broadcast their programmes. This obviously strengthens their negotiation position vis-à-vis PSBs as a result PSBs might not be able to retain all valuable copyrights.

Most of the BBC's non-fiction programming is produced in-house so the BBC already owns most of the copyrights for content made available through the BBC Creative Archive. But clearing and negotiating copyright deals will become far more complex if and when the BBC expands its Creative Archive into fiction programmes. The BBC Creative Archive also poses a copyright issue for users. The rights for BBC archive material are only cleared for use within the UK. As a consequence users are restricted in their possibilities to publish works they have made using material from the BBC Creative Archive on their personal websites. It is a rare user that can employ geo-IP filtering technology to restrict the use of their archive-dependent productions to UK residents only. It is expected that after the pilot phase this restriction will be removed and Creative Archive material could be made available through a distribution partner outside the UK who would pay the BBC (and other stakeholders) for the copyrights for distribution abroad. Users of the service would then be able to publish the derivative works on their websites without restricting access to UK residents because the underlying rights would already have been cleared by the international distribution partner.

Digital archives are an important asset for PSBs. But the case studies show that many competing stakeholders, which include platform and web portal owners, television production companies, and the underlying copyright holders, are interested in exploiting the same content and can more easily do so as they become less dependent on PSBs as aggregators and distributors of their works. The outcome of these copyright deals will determine the extent to which the BBC can develop a rich archive service. Of course it is possible for commercial parties to develop similar services. But a significant advantage in having PSBs offer this is that they can be held accountable for making their archive services available to the public at no or only low costs, on purely non-commercial terms, and with respect for copyright holders by using open source concepts such as the Creative Commons licence.

PSB dilemma 2: Unfair competition and market distortion

PSBs have long histories and receive public funding from licence fees or government grants. As we've seen, these attributes have enabled PSB companies to build large archives with exclusive and valuable content that can be re-exploited on digital platforms. Without this asset the BBC and VARA would not have been able to build the services discussed in the case studies. These archives put PSB companies in a strong position vis-à-vis other market players such as television producers, Internet service providers, network operators and commercial broadcasters that lack such assets. At the same time, however, owning so much increasingly renders PSB vulnerable to accusations of unfair competition and market distortion, especially when they seek to exploit these assets in the digital media domain where competitor stakeholders have similar ambitions but lack the same conditions.

Companies that sell archive footage to broadcasters and other businesses (B2B – business to business), such as ITN, originally objected to the BBC Creative Archive on the grounds of unfair competition. Although the quality of the material offered through BBC's Creative Archive is below professional standards and any commercial use is prohibited, these companies fear piracy and lament competition for their businesses. They believed free access to audiovisual archives and the availability of high quality audiovisual material could hamper their possibilities to commercially exploit this type of material.

But the pilot phase revealed little to no piracy threat. On the contrary and according to the BBC, the Creative Archive could stimulate demand for commercial audiovisual archive material. As familiarity comes and use value grows there might be a consumer market prepared to pay for upgrading their productions based on Creative Archive material to high quality video content. The BBC has also offered the creative archive licence not only to other public bodies but also to commercial companies. Commercial companies have been free to participate and some now acknowledge that making audiovisual archive content available has widened market possibilities and opened new business opportunities.

Generally speaking, there is still debate about the extent of government funding that should be allowed for PSB's online and digital activities. Commercial stakeholders have filed complaints with the European Commission on this issue. At present there is nominal agreement that PSBs must be allowed to develop digital services on diverse platforms, but that governments should make such development and activity an explicit part of the public service broadcasting remit in each case. Often the start of new services must therefore undergo procedures for securing approval from regulators, as discussed earlier. PSB companies will have to present a strong case for the distinctiveness of their services, regarding not only the quality of content but also and as importantly regarding the way in which they organise access to the content, the codes of behaviour they promote in using these services, and the terms of use. Although it is claimed that due to the open and democratic nature of the Internet all companies are forced to be more user-friendly and transparent, issues such as continuity of service, protection of privacy, respect for copyrights and use of open standards are not always guaranteed by commercial players. In this area PSBs are in the best position to develop and set standards. Doing that ought to be part of their public service remit and for which they should be held accountable by regulators.

PSB dilemma 3: Cooperation with third parties

One of the main characteristics of the web is its networked character whereby services are hyperlinked and content can be used and re-used in different formats on different platforms. Given the scale of the Internet today, it's clear that in the digital world scarcity in bandwidth and distribution capacity have been replaced by scarcity in audience attention. The increasing amount of

content available online and on an increasing number of specialised television channels makes it ever more difficult for content providers to reach a sufficient number of viewers and users. Being visible on search engines and linked to by relevant blogs, vlogs, portals and websites has thus become crucial to survival in the online world.

Investments in marketing through traditional channels and, especially also, new media channels such as blogs and viral marketing, as well as search engine optimisation and prominent positions on Electronic Programme Guides are all necessary means to attract an audience in the digital media domain. PSBs must invest in such marketing techniques to secure sufficiently large audiences in an increasingly competitive and fragmented media landscape. Reaching a considerable part of the public is required to legitimise PSB funding for digital services. This, however, rather often leads them to employ commercial logic and forces them to collaborate and negotiate with third parties that are predominantly commercial. Such include the owners of search engines, EPG's and providers of filtering, tagging and profiling services. This is a novel situation compared with conditions in the analogue world.

A similar issue concerning the extent to which PSBs are allowed to act 'commercially' arises when PSBs begin reorganising radio and television to create a cross media organisation in order to operate more effectively in a converging media market. If PSBs adopt a cross media strategy with a particular brand 'experience' as its core organising principle, this implies they will develop links between online and offline media. That, in turn, requires collaborating with other organisations, both for-profit and non-profit. Vara, for instance, would like to further develop its comedy offer and therefore wants to cooperate with mobile operators, comedy theatres and bars (Comedy Train, Toomler), with publishers (for Vara's online comedy magazine) and with Internet companies (Google, for distribution of video content). But current media laws here and in many countries stand in the way of this development by restricting PSBs from co-operating with commercial organisations. PSBs cannot engage in activities with such companies when they thereby serve the commercial purposes of potential partners.

Apart from legal restrictions there are also ethical issues which include PSB's integrity and editorial independence in a commercialised environment. Vara turned down Google's offer to host all of Vara's Internet content for free on its servers. They made this 'poor business decision' in light of the risk to Vara's status as a provider of independent, impartial and objective information. In other cases there have been debates about whether PSBs could distribute their services through MSN web portals where they would necessarily be surrounded by highly commercial services. The concern is that this might conflict with the Vara's editorial policies to the effect that users might not always be able to distinguish between service origination on the one hand and ownership of distribution platform on the other.

Apart from understandable concern over editorial integrity, problems in this field are often also the consequence of a clash of cultures between traditional

broadcasters wanting to retain full control over their content and the context in which it appears, on the one hand, and Internet companies that thrive on mixing, sharing and linking on the other. Again it is clear that PSBs will have to tap this culture to be findable and remain relevant for users (and viewers and listeners). They must develop new ways of cooperating with other organisations and elaborate new 'business models' accordingly. Although there are plenty of opportunities to collaborate with non-commercial organisations such as museums, cultural heritage institutions, community organisations, open source initiatives etc., boundaries on the Internet between commercial and non-commercial services are not always easy to draw and users easily switch between domains.

*PSB dilemma 4: Quality standards
concerning user generated content*

A final issue treated here that confronts PSBs in the digital domain concerns the way in which PSBs integrate user generated content in their offers. User generated content is core to the BBC's Creative Archive and is part of Vara Comedy's offer. PSB quality standards and the concept of user generated content have a complex, sometimes quite contradictory relationship, because unrestricted publication of content by users may conflict with PSBs valuable reputation for quality and impartiality. PSB companies certainly recognise that viewers are developing into co-creators of content. The challenge is in offering a platform for user created content that will contribute to the PSB's democratic and participatory remit, while preventing harm to their reputation. The BBC Creative Archive offered users ample options to view and create, but much less to distribute their creations to wider audiences. It did provide options for showcasing the results of what people produced using its archive material. During the pilot phase this was done through competitions in which the best 'remix' submissions were posted on the BBC's websites. Using this form of a competition enabled the BBC to moderate and select the material submitted by users, and distinguished their platform from non-moderated services including, especially, YouTube, and Google Video where it is hard to find what one is looking for, where copyright infringements by users who include copyright protected material in their productions are frequent, and where a lot of the material on offer is of low quality.

This example illustrates that to safeguard their own standards PSB companies will have to work out strategies for editing and moderating user generated content that is published on their websites or incorporated in broadcast programming. But moderation is time consuming and costly and both the efforts and costs will increase as a service becomes more popular. This raises a whole range of questions regarding the ways of organising moderation and preventing copyright infringements, which again are likely to involve extra costs. Here we have yet another area where PSBs have not yet acquired suf-

ficient experience but where there is a lot to gain in developing accessible, high quality and relevant platforms for users.

Conclusions and discussion

This chapter centred attention on questions about what the role of public service broadcasting could or should be in the evolving digital media landscape, and what this means both for PSB's strategies as well as for PSB's remit and government policy. The analysis highlighted a number of problematic and sometimes contradictory demands. In particular we observed that if PSB's digital activities are strictly limited to its core radio and television activities that will put them at a developmental and competitive disadvantage and in an artificially constricted reserve. Such will inherently put them behind the curve in market trends towards cross media and cross platform production, distribution and consumption. To the extent that PSB is allowed to pursue these developmental trends, however, it becomes more difficult for regulators to define the limits and clarify the scope of the remit.

Most European PSBs and governments have so far agreed about broadening the remit to include all relevant platforms, but at the same time are establishing stricter regulatory regimes for new services compared with radio and television, including in most cases prior approval by government for new developmental initiatives. The BBC's "public value test" is an interesting way of accommodating these contradictory demands for a full multi-platform strategy on the one hand and a limited role for PSBs outside the broadcasting domain on the other. It tries to combine an assessment of public values and value for users, irrespective of how the market performs, with economic criteria originating in competition law. These economic criteria also assess positive effects on markets, such as stimulating the take up of digital services or creating new markets for audiovisual content. How the different aspects will be weighed and whether this reasoning will hold against European Commission pressures to adopt a more market- and competition-oriented approach is as still unclear but will be crucial for PSBs future.

Moving from the general policy level to an analysis of the two case studies, this chapter shows how the strategic and regulatory dilemmas for PSBs in the digital domain work out in practice. The analysis leads to three important conclusions. Firstly, both case studies clarify the distinct nature of PSB services, not only in opening high quality material for more extensive re-use but also in guaranteeing open access to this material while at the same time preventing piracy and, in the case of BBC Creative Archive, experimenting with a new form of copyright protection based on the creative commons principles. Secondly, the case studies point to the tension between current restrictions for PSBs operating in the market on the one hand and, on the other hand, the necessity to adopt commercial strategies. These 'commercially tainted' endeavours concern: a) marketing strategies to build and sustain an audience; b) generation of new

revenue streams to cover the extra costs implicated in building new services and clearing copyrights for reusing programme material; and c) co-operation with commercial and non-commercial partners that contribute to building a better service for end-users, provide visibility to PSBs services or share in the investments required for the service.

Some authors involved in the debate on PSB's role in the digital domain argue for a strong and interconnected digital public domain in which both PSBs and other public and civil organisations collaborate. According to Murdock (2005: 227) public broadcasters can play a pivotal role in building these digital commons:

Developing these resources [for PSBs online and digital services]... requires us to abandon our old analogue maps of the cultural industries which depicted a series of stand alone institutions separated by incompatible technologies and compile a digital chart showing public broadcasting as the central node in a new network of public and civil institutions that together make up the digital commons, a linked space defined by its shared refusal of commercial enclosure and its commitment to free and universal access, reciprocity and collaborative activity.

As the case studies show, PSB definitely upholds public values in their digital and Internet offerings, including especially universal access, quality standards and educating audiences in digital skills. Collaboration between PSBs and other public institutions and non-profit initiatives could strengthen the digital public domain. However, these services function in the midst of a commercial domain in which public and private worlds are not as neatly separated as in the analogue world. On digital platforms it is harder to draw borders between different types of content (public and commercial, professional and amateur). Rigid attempts actually run counter to the networked character of the web. PSBs can only survive if they build clever relationships with other parties, both public as well as commercial, albeit under pre-determined sets of conditions.

Thirdly, analysis showed how the logic of the Internet world and the more authoritative logic of public broadcasting are not always easy to reconcile. Feeding into the growing popularity of P2P networks and services based on sharing, communication between end-users (such as blogs and wiki's) communities and other forms of user generated content (web 2.0) challenges PSB with urgent questions about how and to what extent they should function as the upholders and caretakers of quality, morality and good taste, and also where exactly the need for professional production, selection, interpretation and guidance lays in a world where, as often said, everyone can become a journalist or artist. On an optimistic note, PSB endeavours could lead to highly valued new services for a general audience, increasing their ICT skills and stimulating creativity, and to new and fruitful exchanges between professional and amateur programme makers (content producers). In redefining PSB's remit as Public Service Media, and in assessing and evaluating their performance in a digital media landscape,

the new and developing logics of the digital domain must refine what should be taken into account. This means that regulators should consider the implications of more networked and de-centralised structures, public-private partnerships, new business and copyright models, standards for open access, and increased user participation in efforts both to define PBS's remit and in monitoring and regulating PSB's performance in this field.

Notes

1. The case studies are also part of TNO reports for the EU 6th framework programme New Media for a New Millennium, NM2, see: www.ist-nm2.org. The policy issues were investigated in projects commissioned by the Dutch Ministry for Education, Culture and Science. These reports were compiled by the author of this article in collaboration with Gabriela Bodea, Jop Esmeijer, Sander Limonard, Fleur Mevissen, Nico Pals and Oscar Rietkerk. See Leurdijk and others (2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2006). Data were drawn from a combination of desk research, case studies and interviews.
2. The BBC, for example, formulated this vision in its document Building Public Value: Renewing the BBC for a Digital World in 2004.
3. Restrictions in national legislation are to an important degree influenced by European regulation. Based on the protocol on PSB attached to the Amsterdam Agreement (1997) it is Member States' competence to establish PSBs scope. PSBs can offer digital and internet services as long as their remit in this domain is made explicit and financing is transparent. Governments should clearly establish the scope of PSBs activities in law and not leave this to PSBs' discretion. In some recent cases the EU seems to have shifted to a more restrictive interpretation of PSBs' remit in the digital domain and has given more prominence to EU rules concerning State aid and competition than to EU Member States' competence to determine PSBs' remit and tasks (see also Wiedeman, 2004).
4. http://www.bbccharterreview.org.uk/pdf_documents/Cm6925_BBC%20RoyalCharterFinal.pdf.
5. Figures on PSB budgets come from the European Audiovisual Observatory. Figures on the budget spend for new media come from PSB's annual financial accounts and interviews with regulators (see Leurdijk 2005a, 2005b).
6. See for instance: OECD, Working Party on Telecommunication and Information Services Policies (2003). The implications of convergence for regulation of electronic communications, DSTI/ICCP/TISP(2003)5/FINAL, p.3. and OECD, Working Party on Telecommunication and Information Services Policies (2007) Policy considerations for audio visual content distribution in a multiplatform environment. DSTI/ICCP/TISP(2006)3/FINAL, 15 January 2007 and European Commission (1999), Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. The Convergence of the Telecommunications, Media and Information Technology Sectors, and the Implications for Regulation Results of the Public Consultation on the Green Paper [COM(97)623].
7. Thanks to Wessel Valk, head of Vara's new media department (interview 17-08-06) and Paul Gerhardt, project leader BBC Creative Archive (interview 11-08-06).
8. This is particularly true for recordings of full shows. Acquiring content rights to clips is generally a lot easier.

References

- Anderson, C. (2006) *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More*. New York: Hyperion.
- BBC (2006) *BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2005-2006: Governors Review of Services*. New Media. London: BBC.
- Born, G. (2003) *Uncertain Futures: Public Service Television and the Transition to Digital – a Comparative Analysis of the Digital Television Strategies of the BBC and Channel 4*. London: Media@lse Electronic Working Papers, no.3, London School of Economics.
- DigiTAG (2006) *Analogue Switch-off: Strategies to End Analogue Terrestrial Television in Europe*. Geneva: Digital Terrestrial Television Action Group. www.digitag.org
- Harrison, J. and Wessels, B. (2005) A New Public Service Communication Environment? Public Service Broadcasting Values in the Reconfiguring Media. *New Media & Society*, 7(6), pp.834-853.
- IDC (2003) *Western Europe Digital STB, PVR and Television Adapter Forecast and Analysis, 2002-2007*. April 2003. Framingham USA: IDC.
- Leurdijk, A. and Rietkerk, O.D. (2005a) *Market Perspectives for Interactive and Reconfigurable Media*. Report for EU 6th Framework Programme New Media for a New Millennium (NM2), public deliverable, available on www.ist-nm2.org.
- Leurdijk, A. (2005b). *Overheidsbeleid Publieke Omroepen en Nieuwe Diensten in Vijf Europese Landen (Government policies concerning public broadcasters and new ICT services)*. TNO report 33578. Delft: TNO 2005.
- Leurdijk, A. (2005c). *Quick Scan Beleid Publieke Omroep in Europa, Nieuw Zeeland en de Verenigde Staten*. TNO report. (*Quick Scan of PSB policies in Europe, New Zealand and the US*). Delft TNO 2005.
- Leurdijk, A., Pals, N., Limonard, S., Mevissen, F. and Esmeijer, J. (2006) *Market Perspectives for ShapeShifted Television*. Report for EU 6th Framework Programme New Media for a New Millennium (NM2), public deliverable, available on www.ist-nm2.org.
- Murdock, G. (2005) Building the Digital Commons: Public Broadcasting in the Age of the Internet. In Lowe, G.F. and Jauert, P. (eds.) *Cultural Dilemmas in Public Service Broadcasting*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- OECD (2003) Working Party on Telecommunication and Information Services Policies. *The Implications of Convergence for Regulation of Electronic Communications*. DSTI/ICCP/TISP(2003)5/FINAL. JT00167398. Ofcom (2006) *The Communications Market*. 10 August 2006.
- Poel, M. and Tee, R. (2006) *Business Model Analysis as a Tool for Policy Analysis: Digital Television Platforms in France and the Netherlands*. Freeband, B@home. Delft: TNO deliverable.
- Screen Digest (2003) *Interactive Television in Europe: UK and France Lead the Way*. September.
- Steemers, J. (1999) Between Culture and Commerce: The Problem of Redefining Public Service Broadcasting for the Digital Age. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 5(3), pp.44-66.
- Wiedeman, V. (2004) Public Service Broadcasting, State Aid and the Internet. *Emerging EU Law. Diffusion Online*, 2004, nr. 47. http://www.ebu.ch/CMSimages/en/_online_47_e_verana_bis_tcm6-18562.pdf.

Can the Public Service Broadcaster Survive?

Renewal and Compromise in the New BBC Charter

Steven Barnett

Public service broadcasters around the world are having to fight for their survival. Whether it be progressive cuts in public funding, constitutional restrictions imposed on national broadcasters, progressive deregulation of the commercial sector or direct interference by governments in output or management, the fundamental issue remains: as the media environment becomes more fragmented and more competitive, and as convergent technologies blur the lines between broadcasting and other media platforms, the arguments against a publicly subsidised presence become more vocal and therefore make a single publicly funded institution more difficult to sustain.

For much of the second half of the 20th century the challenge for public broadcasters in mature democracies was how to disengage from the state and preserve both political and operational independence while still being irrevocably tied to it through various forms of public funding mechanisms. Governments were disinclined to release entirely their levers of control over what politicians have conventionally seen as the most powerful form of political communication. In the words of Eva Etzioni-Halevy, “a national broadcasting corporation will be expected to be both politically independent and politically accountable; both controlled by the government and uncontrolled by the government at one and the same time” (1987:7). The ambiguities in constitutional status and uncertainty in public funding levels have traditionally allowed for external pressures to be exerted by incumbent governments on their respective national broadcasters – sometimes subtle and barely noticeable, sometimes explicit and brutal. The same challenges have recently been faced by public broadcasters in emerging democracies attempting to extricate themselves from both the mechanics and the culture of centralised state control.

Over the last 20 years, however, public broadcasters having been facing a different and more potent threat. Having always been situated somewhat ambiguously between the state and the market, it is the market which has increasingly been exerting a greater influence on how the scope and role of public broadcasters are defined. As explained below, this is partly because of the widespread acceptance of liberal market theory as the dominant political

ideology for governments of left and right, and partly because global market pressures make it increasingly difficult for governments to intervene to regulate these market forces.

In his analysis of what he has called “market-driven politics”, Colin Leys said that “States are obliged to become more ‘internationalised’, adapted to serving the needs of global market forces” (2001: 2&83). Nowhere is this more true than in the field of communications where media corporations like Disney, News Corporation or Time-Warner are constantly seeking ways to expand their markets and market shares. In the global war of corporate expansion, public corporations, which themselves have significant shares of the media cake, are perceived as significant inhibitors of private sector expansion and therefore seen as legitimate targets for the advocacy of greater restrictions and smaller scale.

The combination of this growth in corporate media enterprise and the rolling back of the public sector in virtually every area of social policy – facilitated in Europe by the economic priorities of the EU – has led some to question whether the whole public welfare philosophical basis on which public service broadcasting is grounded is being permanently eroded. Cultural pessimists believe the threat to public broadcasters is more fundamental than simple political expediency in the face of a powerful and globalised commercial sector; rather it goes to the heart of the social democratic consensus about what constitutes the public good. In what was essentially a valedictory message for public service broadcasting, Michael Tracey outlined the vision at stake:

Buried deep in our concerns lies the spirit of the Enlightenment, the idea that the world can be a humane and rational place serving the needs and wishes of the people, liberating their potential and corralling their darker impulses.... The public broadcasting community consists in effect of optimistic humanists who believe that a broadcasting service can and must be sustained whatever the historical conditions (1998: 259).

Tracey’s depressing conclusion was that “the fundamental problem which public broadcasters face lies in the shakiness of the very idea of a public good and public interest”. In similar vein, Curran quoted the pessimistic analysis of Elihu Katz that “No less than the United States, the governments of Europe.... are bowing to the combined constraints of the new media technology, the new liberal mood, the economic and political burden of public broadcasting” (2002: 187). These are arguments not just about operational decline or opportunistic political opposition. They are about the progressive abandonment of those underlying welfare principles which ground and surround public service. If true, it would amount to a paradigm shift in Western European values which would go well beyond the fluctuations of political pragmatism: it would amount to the death of an idea.

Curran himself, arguing against the pessimism of Katz and Tracey, posed a more optimistic Western European vision of continuing support for society as “a social system in which social relations are underpinned by a sense of

community and concern for others, a set of ethical norms that influence social behaviour, and open dialogue that enables different groups to participate in the shaping and revision of shared values". In similar vein, Splichal argues that "[t]he concept of public service is... [and] deeply rooted in historical processes of human emancipation, and thus closely linked with the virtues of human freedom and equality" and that this broad vision survives as part of the European democratic tradition: "The ideal of public service media was and remains essential to democracy and public spheres in Europe since it is inherently connected with the grand idea of publicness inscribed in the foundations of the democratic polity" (2006: 17&19).

That the idea survives in Europe, and survives in relatively healthy form, is borne out partly by the public hand-wringing debates within European nation states about the nature, form, funding and significance of public broadcasters, and partly by empirical evidence of their continuing – albeit more constrained – contributions to national cultural life. In his recent survey of key trends in European television, Dahlgren concluded that "[i]mportant structural features of PSB...remain basically intact. Institutionally, PSB has restructured and streamlined its organization over the past years; PSB finances tend to be more stable today, even if they are still seen as too limited" (2000: 30). In other words, public service broadcasting institutions might be struggling in the face of fierce competition, deregulation, audience fragmentation and technological transformation, but in most European countries they are still regarded as integral parts of their respective countries' cultural and democratic welfare – especially when compared to the marginalised operations of, say, ABC in Australia, PBS in America or CBC in Canada. In Europe, the flame of PSB still burns relatively brightly where in many other countries it barely flickers.

Further evidence of this burning flame appears in the rulings of supra-national European bodies. The Council of Europe [CoE] has long been the standard-bearer for cultural arguments around public service broadcasting, and its recent pronouncements show no diminution of enthusiasm. One CoE declaration in 2005 described public service broadcasting as "an element of social cohesion, a reflection of cultural diversity and an essential factor for pluralistic communication accessible to all"¹. The CoE has consistently emphasised the importance of classic PSB principles such as universal access, promoting cultural diversity, sustaining healthy democratic practices, supporting creative innovation and original production, and maintaining plural information sources; its support for these ideals shows no signs of being muted or compromised by the growth of competition or arguments around convergence.

The European Commission [EC] is often treated as the antithesis of the CoE, a conservative juggernaut driven by the economic dictates of the Treaty of Rome and impervious to delicate arguments about the social, democratic and cultural significance of broadcasting. Even here, however, the evidence is more ambivalent. The Protocol on the System of Public Broadcasting, agreed in Amsterdam in 1997 and known since as the Amsterdam Protocol, has been instrumental in ensuring that EU countries have discretion both to define and

– within reason – to fund their public service broadcasters. The introduction to the Protocol states categorically that “the system of public broadcasting in the Member States is directly related to the democratic, social and cultural needs of each society and to the need to preserve media pluralism”.

As David Ward (2003) has argued, the decisions taken recently by the EC have suggested that public service broadcasting is acceptable within the terms of the Treaty. As long as funding is deemed to be proportionate to the remits set by the individual member states, even the EC’s Competition Directorate has shown willingness to accept the market distortions which public subsidies necessarily involve. This means that any deterioration in the functioning of public broadcasters cannot be laid at the feet of the EC but is down to individual nation states. Ward concluded:

...the significant stress a number of authors have placed on the Commission, which, some argue, has been instrumental in the demise of public service broadcasting in Western Europe, leaves them tilting at windmills. It is the West European nation states and the broadcasters themselves to whom we must turn in order to understand the source of the recent changes in broadcasting (2003: 248).

The idea, then, lives on in Europe and the battleground for its survival lies within the political and cultural confines of national boundaries. Over the last three years the UK has been the site of precisely such a battle. Over that time negotiations for continuation of the structure, funding and institutional presence of the BBC have taken place within an extremely hostile competitive environment in which the private sector has ceaselessly lobbied for a much reduced public sector. This birthplace of the public service idea provides the backdrop for a major test of its resilience and sustainability in a multi-channel, digital, convergent media environment. Because it is so often taken as a role model for PSB elsewhere, and because media policy makers elsewhere so often consider the British case exemplary, this has implications beyond the United Kingdom.

The BBC exists, somewhat anachronistically, by virtue of a Royal Charter which establishes it as an independent institution funded by a licence fee levied on every television household. By tradition, each Charter normally last for ten years. The closing years of that period therefore offer an opportunity for governments to reconsider all aspects of the BBC’s structure and funding. The last BBC Charter, the eighth since its formation as a public body in 1927, ended on 31st December 2006. An exhaustive process of review which started in 2003 culminated in September 2006 in a ten year renewal of the Charter starting from January 2007. The BBC will therefore continue not only as a properly resourced, mass audience and independent broadcaster, but will be in the vanguard of the government’s determination to move Britain from analogue to digital transmission by 2012. On the face of it, despite the global shift away from public spending models and the growing influence of multi-national media conglomerates, the BBC seems to have survived intact.

There has, however, been a price to pay for that survival, which in the longer term may signal a progressive decline in the BBC's reach and influence. This chapter argues that despite the BBC's apparent success in securing financial and constitutional support for another ten years, the compromises forced upon it do not bode well for the institutional battles which will be fought in other European countries. It examines the reasons behind the BBC's apparent victory in what appears to be a losing global fight for public service broadcasting and public service institutions. It attributes the BBC's success in securing its future for another ten years to two interlocking reasons: first, a relatively benign political environment which is not averse to notions of public intervention in the public interest; and second, its universal appeal to the British public which, despite the levy of a compulsory and regressive tax, continues to hold both the BBC itself and the principles on which it is based in generally high esteem.

It then looks in detail at some of the crucial changes which the government has imposed on the structure and public service obligations of the BBC, arguing that the BBC's survival may be at the expense of a much more stringent and inflexible regulatory regime that will severely hamper operational freedom. It examines the responses of industry competitors to the government review and concludes that – despite government rhetoric and even its best intentions – the interests of competition and the market have ultimately prevailed over the interests of citizens.

The political and competitive context

The New Labour government came to power in 1997 on the back of a manifesto which owed much to its Conservative predecessor's commitment to business, competition and the free market. Despite the rhetoric, however, it was clear that strong support remained within the party and the country for the principles of public intervention and the more social democratic approach of a Labour government under Tony Blair.

Even so, the first interventions by the new Culture Secretary, Chris Smith, in debates about the future of broadcasting came as a pleasant surprise to supporters of public service broadcasting in general, and the BBC in particular. In one of his first major speeches in 1998, Smith explicitly endorsed the BBC's role as a mass audience broadcaster with a right and a duty to offer popular programmes.² In particular, as criticism mounted that the proliferation of new cable and satellite channels, as well as new digital offerings, made a public subsidy increasingly irrelevant, Smith was keen to argue the opposite. Speaking to the Royal Television Society in 1999, he was unequivocal: "When you look at what the BBC has done to promote and develop Internet access to news through the truly excellent BBC online, you have to admit they've done it well and got it right. To those who complain that they've been able to do so because their protected revenue has enabled them to do so without risk I would reply

– that’s precisely the reason why we need to have a publicly funded broadcaster – because they can afford to take risks and they should”.³

This was an exceptionally strong statement of support because it confronted the politically very sensitive issue of the impact of the BBC on the market-place. As Smith was to discover, and as his successor as Culture Secretary, Tessa Jowell, also discovered during the process of the BBC’s charter review, a growing number of vociferous commercial voices were complaining about a publicly funded broadcaster living comfortably on guaranteed revenue, insulated from market pressures, and making life extremely difficult for those seeking to make a living in a very crowded and competitive media environment.

Over the last ten years, these pressures have become much more acute for three reasons. First, the BBC’s traditional rivals in terrestrial television – ITV, Channel Four, and Channel Five – have all traditionally accepted the BBC’s right to operate across all programme genres, including the popular and the entertaining. The combination of increased competition, a relaxation of public service obligations for commercial broadcasters, and a less buoyant economy meant that the BBC’s competitors focussed on the more lucrative areas of programming: entertainment, soaps and imported programmes. As the BBC continued to make and schedule mass audience entertainment programmes its more commercially driven rivals began to complain more vocally.

Second, a number of different channels were emerging through the different platforms of cable, satellite and (later) digital terrestrial television which were struggling to find their feet. As the number of specialist or niche channels increased – in radio as well as television – so the argument about the BBC’s involvement in such areas intensified. BBC television channels devoted to news (News 24) or children’s programmes (CBeebies and CBBC), or even with an emphasis on arts and culture (BBC4), were all attacked by commercial rivals who claimed to offer similar programming – Sky in 24 hour news, the Disney Channel and Nickelodeon for kids, and satellite channel Artsworld in arts and culture. The same argument applied to sports rights in radio with one commercial station, TalkSport, incensed that the BBC should be allowed to use public funding to outbid struggling commercial stations for the commentary rights on Premiership soccer matches.

Third, many of these competitor channels and stations had become, or were in the process of becoming, part of large multi-national media conglomerates used to operating in less regulated environments like the United States and Australia, environments with much weaker publicly funded broadcasters in many European countries. Given their corporate resources and global perspective, these competitors were better placed than in previous years to lobby government and to spend money commissioning reports on the potential damage which an ‘over-funded’ BBC could inflict on the private sector.

Tessa Jowell therefore launched the review of the BBC’s charter in the full knowledge that it was likely to unleash a barrage of opposition. But she also understood that the BBC still chimed with much of New Labour’s political heritage and psyche: as an institution which existed to further the public in-

terest, which acted as a counterweight to the power and influence of private media corporations, and which – though funded by a regressive tax – was an excellent example of how relatively small public funding can provide disproportionately high public benefit through economies of scale. It is therefore fair to conclude that the political environment – even after the fall-out of the Hutton report and a very damaging confrontation between government and the BBC in the run-up to the Iraq war – was relatively benign.⁴ And Jowell's introduction to the consultation document was unequivocal about the benefits and importance of the BBC:

The BBC is a unique institution. Unique in the role it plays in public life. Unique in the way it is funded. Unique in the place it holds in the public's affections. Like the NHS, it is a quintessentially British institution. The public trusts it. It is part of what defines us as a nation, both at home and abroad. The BBC is recognised throughout the world, where it is seen as a benchmark of quality, integrity and diversity.....Only when people have made their voices heard can we be sure of achieving the one outcome the Government is committed to: the continuation of a strong BBC, independent of Government, both now and in the future.⁵

From the very beginning, then, the consultation process presupposed a positive perspective on the BBC and further questions were couched in terms that reminded readers of the BBC's cultural contributions, both domestically and internationally. Readers were asked what they valued about the BBC's contribution to democracy, about the BBC's educational impact, about its role in supporting and promoting sport, its patronage of the arts, and on its impact on the broadcasting sector in general through training, stimulating the health of independent producers and through "cutting-edge research and development".

At the same time, the consultation acknowledged the arguments of BBC competitors, first about whether the BBC should be offering mass appeal programming, and second whether the scope and scale of the BBC as currently operating was still desirable. It raised, in particular, the issue of the BBC as a mass audience broadcaster versus the "market gap" argument preferred by free market theorists:

We are interested in whether the BBC should continue to provide a mix of genres – 'something for everyone' – which has been a key principle underlying the BBC's output since it was established..... [S]ome people argue that the BBC should only fill gaps left by commercial broadcasters. The answers to these questions have far reaching implications.⁶

Altogether, the consultation document posed 24 key questions and invited anyone who had an opinion to participate in the debate on the BBC's future.

Responses to consultation: Industry versus the public

Responses demonstrated a sharp division of opinion between the majority of the general public and the BBC's competitors. The DCMS commissioned an independent report of public responses which concluded:

The BBC is loved. The majority of respondents were satisfied with the service and wished to retain the licence fee. The public perceive themselves as stakeholders in the BBC, not purely because of their financial contribution through the licence fee but also through a recognition that the Corporation defines their cultural experience and identity".⁷

This essentially favourable response was an early indication of continuing public affection which was summed up by the DCMS report as a perception of the BBC as "an imperfect beauty". It quoted one respondent as saying, rather eloquently: "the BBC is either a miracle or a conjuring trick and either way I do not mind".

By contrast, responses from competitors revealed the difficulties which the private sector felt were being inflicted on them by a heavily subsidised public sector. There was concern about apparently unfettered expansion of BBC services; criticism about the BBC's freedom to move into areas or change output in existing areas at will; and the BBC's overall impact on the market. BSKyB, a long-standing critic, argued that:

Involvement by the BBC is likely to distort competition and deter investment, particularly where there is uncertainty as to the scope of its activities.... it is important that approvals for new services are tightly drafted and subject to stringent conditions.⁸

Furthermore, it argued that such a requirement should not just be confined to new initiatives but should be extended to existing services: "In the event that the BBC wishes to introduce changes to the remit of a particular channel or service...it should be required to apply for a variation to the remit and conditions". Sky was straightforward about the reasons, which were not related to the public interest but to the interests of the market: "It is important for industry to have certainty about the activities of the BBC... [Thus] in order to ensure that competition and investment can flourish, the BBC should not be able to extend its activities beyond the express scope of any approval or remit."

Emap which competes with the BBC in both magazines and radio sectors, proposed in similar vein that BBC radio's output should be defined by "Promises of Performance" which would "spell out in detail the distinctiveness of the services to be provided and their public service commitments". It was particularly concerned that this distinctiveness should apply to peak times when commercial radio earns most of its revenue.⁹

Both Channels 4 and Five argued that the BBC's existing remit needed to be tightened and carefully policed through transparent processes of monitoring and enforcement. Channel 4's position was particularly interesting given its clashing priorities of public service obligations and survival in the commercial market-place. As well as arguing for remits for individual channels and services, it was keen to emphasise the market distortion argument: "Disproportionate investment by the BBC may lead to under-investment by other providers and potential providers, or to unnecessary inflation of costs. The BBC's dominance in interactive online services is a case in point."¹⁰

The independent news provider, ITN, which provides news bulletins for both ITV and Channel 4, was equally concerned about the BBC's impact on competitors. It was worried in particular that the process of justifying major schedule changes for the BBC is less restrictive than for the commercial sector. It cited in evidence ITV's long-running battle with regulatory authorities to move its 10 p.m. news bulletin, compared to the BBC's ability to switch its main evening news from 9 o'clock to 10 p.m. in a matter of weeks: "This example served to show the huge difference in regulatory scrutiny between the BBC and the commercial broadcasters. A greater degree of independent scrutiny would help achieve a more level playing field".¹¹

Another industry argument concerned the extent to which the BBC immersed itself in mass audience programming which "mimicked" the private sector. The Independent Practitioners in Advertising, representing ad agencies, accused the BBC of behaving "increasingly like a commercial broadcaster". It argued that there had been an increase in mass audience programming such as *Fame Academy* and the soap opera *Eastenders*, amounting to a concerted effort to "attract the largest possible audiences to the BBC, regardless of how wasteful this might be in public resources."¹² It too argued for the BBC's remit and performance to be monitored by Ofcom to prevent what it termed the "uncontrolled exercise of power".

Perhaps the most scathing criticism of all came from the Commercial Radio Companies Association, an umbrella industry body representing all commercial radio stations but dominated by the major station-owning conglomerates. It accused the BBC of being "so big and self-absorbed that it sometimes cannot see the damage it inflicts on those involved in commercially funded, wealth creating broadcasting". As with ITN and the TV competitors, it was particularly exercised by the lack of predictability of BBC radio, its ability to change formats at will, and the inability of commercial competitors to respond freely and flexibly. In putting its case, the CRCA attempted to align the interests of consumers and citizens with the interests of the commercial sector: "[the BBC] is beginning to act against the media interests of citizens and consumers by undermining the competitiveness and creativity of commercial broadcasters. Weakening that part of UK radio responsible for wealth creation is not helpful to the UK at large and does not enhance listener choice".¹³

The overwhelmingly critical stance from the industry, and the unanimity of calls for greater restrictions on and much more stringent oversight of BBC activi-

ties, seemed to contrast with the views of the general public. The government, however, wanted more precise and representative feedback from the general public – not least because systematic evidence of public affection would help to overcome the objections of a powerful and unified competitor lobby. It therefore embarked on a three stage opinion research process.

The first consisted of 34 focus groups and 12 individual interviews with members of the public. Although findings were not universally positive – with some complaints about elitism and arrogance and others about dumbing down – the overall verdict was that “the BBC’s output is generally considered at least adequate and at best outstanding”.¹⁴

This stage was followed by some “deliberative” research, a technique in which people are exposed to relevant materials and arguments over a period of several weeks so that they have a chance to engage with more complex subject matter and become more informed. This study involved a cross-section of 72 people in three separate stages of research. The outcome, both in terms of the survival and funding of the BBC, was even more positive towards the BBC than the focus groups. The authors concluded that there was clear evidence “that [the BBC] is felt to be an important part of British society – even by some of its harshest critics.... At the beginning of the deliberation many seemed indifferent to the BBC, but by the end of the process only a small minority seemed indifferent to the possibility of its abolition”.¹⁵

These findings were confirmed in the final stage of quantitative opinion research by MORI in which the questions asked were framed by the findings of the qualitative studies. The study found that the BBC had, for example, a better image than all competitor channels on a number of different dimensions including reputation, accuracy, quality, trust, and impartiality. Even in areas where other broadcasters have forged their reputation the BBC performed well, for example coming a close second to ITV on entertainment and a close second to Channel 4 on being “cutting edge”. Overall, 72% agreed that “I would miss the BBC if it wasn’t there” and overall satisfaction scores were higher than for any of the rival terrestrial channels (75% for the BBC compared to 68% for ITV, 58% for C4, and 50% for Five).¹⁶

This comprehensive approach to public opinion research was complemented by a further qualitative stage of research involving ten focus groups to test reactions to the main changes before the government’s proposals were finalised.

The government’s proposals and implications for the longer term

Those proposals were finally published on 2nd March 2005 in a government Green Paper: *Review of the BBC Royal Charter: A Strong BBC, Independent of Government*, DCMS. In her foreword, the Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell summarised the views of licence fee payers, as derived from the wealth of opinion research:

Their views – your views – were very clear. The BBC is liked and trusted by millions. Its services are valued and enjoyed. It is seen as having a vital role to play in news and in sustaining and informing our democracy. The principles of public service broadcasting (PSB), with the BBC at its heart, are widely understood and supported. And although people in their millions are embracing the rapidly expanding choices offered by digital broadcasting they still see the BBC as having a key role in the multichannel future. If anything, people see maintaining PSB as more important, not less, as more and more commercial services crowd on to the scene.¹⁷

In other words, the government's essentially benign and positive attitude towards the BBC was a reflection of popular opinion and offered a solid rationalisation for withstanding calls from industry competitors to reduce its scale, funding or operating philosophy. It allowed the government to endorse the BBC as a major cultural and institutional presence, despite the proliferation of new broadcasting and multimedia opportunities. And it provided the government with a platform for leaving unchanged two key areas: the BBC's basic funding and its constitutional position. It therefore announced three key decisions preserving the status quo:

- The BBC would continue to exist through a ten year Royal Charter which provides it with the distance and independence it requires. Despite the speed and unpredictability of technological change, the Charter was to be granted for 10 years from 1 January 2007 because “the BBC, the public and the wider industry need stability during the period of switchover to digital television”.
- The licence fee should continue because it had popular support and there was “no viable alternative”. There would be a review of BBC funding towards the end of the switchover process, around 2012.
- The BBC should continue to be a broadcaster “of scale and scope” – i.e. it should continue to make programmes across all the genres including entertainment, and including the development of new technologies and new platforms where appropriate.

Thus, in the face of enormous industry pressure, despite the massive increase in media organisations with a commercial interest, despite the spread of global conglomerates with greater leverage over governments, and despite the changing technological environment which has made future planning so precarious, the essential institutional structure and funding of the BBC remained intact and guaranteed for the next ten years. On the face of it, this was a remarkable feat of public sector survival against all global and political trends.

The full story, however, is less optimistic. The bulk of the Green Paper which announced the BBC's continuation contained the framework for a number of profound changes to the operational philosophy and mechanisms of the BBC. These, after further consultation and tightening up of wording, were

incorporated into the government's White Paper, the statement of government policy published in March 2006. After debate in Parliament, these proposals became incorporated into the two documents which defined the future of the BBC from 2007: the Royal Charter, and the Agreement between the BBC and the Government. While there were a number of changes to the mechanisms of BBC operation, two in particular marked a fundamental shift in the BBC's relationship to the public, to the market, and to its future as a major cultural organisation.

First, and most radically, was the abolition of the BBC Board of Governors and their replacement with a BBC Trust. This was much more than the replacement of one administrative body with another: the Trust is responsible for setting the overall strategic direction of the BBC and exercising oversight of the work of the Executive Board. The new Executive Board has both executive and non-executive members with responsibility for delivering the BBC's services within the framework set by the Trust. The Trust provides oversight by setting objective measures for the management, against which the Executive will be assessed and held accountable. The two bodies therefore operate independently of each other, where previously the Boards of Governors and Management often worked together and management lines were blurred.

The rationale for a new administrative system emerged originally out of the Hutton report which condemned many aspects of BBC management. The resignations of both the BBC Chairman and the Director General in the immediate aftermath of Hutton led, amongst other things, to some trenchant criticism of the "dual role" played by the governors: both protecting the BBC's independence from government and holding management to account for its decisions.

In fact, the new structure does little to overcome that tension which is necessarily implicit in the very existence of a publicly funded broadcaster that is not an arm of the state. As was clear from White Paper rhetoric, the changes were driven more by contemporary arguments – prevalent throughout the public sector – for accountability and transparency in the way that decisions are made and public money is spent. In announcing the changes, the Culture Secretary called the Trust the "eyes and ears of the licence fee payer", focussed on the public interest. In the words of the White Paper:

Licence fee payers are the BBC's shareholders. They cannot express their views directly by selling their shares or by voting down the board – so their interests need to be represented by a body whose purpose is to understand, capture and bring to bear the public interest on the activities of the BBC. This body will be the BBC Trust.¹⁸

The Trust must therefore actively engage with, and seek the views of, licence fee payers and make public its decisions "with an unprecedented obligation to openness and transparency". Although independence from government was emphasised several times, such statements were more about reassuring public opinion – both nationally and internationally in the wake of Hutton

and the unprecedented resignations – that the Government had no wish to “tame” the BBC.

In fact, the reforms had nothing to do with protecting the BBC from government interference, but were a political response to societal calls for greater accountability. Coupled with the second fundamental change, however, they were also an effective means of reassuring competitors that the BBC would, indeed, be “tamed” – not in its approach to independent political journalism and attitude to interrogating the government, but in its ability to operate freely within the market-place.

The second change was the mechanisms through which the Trust monitors and assesses the BBC’s performance, comprising three separate but interconnected processes. In her foreword to the White Paper, the Culture Secretary described this as a “triple lock” system. It was a revealing description. For although she described the system as designed “to ensure the highest standards in everything the BBC produces”, it was a more fitting description of a system which will “lock” the BBC into a much more precisely defined set of responsibilities and outputs.

The first element is a requirement for every service which the BBC runs – each TV channel, radio station, online service etc. – to have a detailed “service licence” established by the Trust which provides “clear indicators to enable the Trust to monitor and ensure the performance of the Executive in delivering individual services”. Each service licence will be reviewed by the Trust at least once every five years. The service licences themselves are to be drawn up by the Trust to fulfil the newly articulated “six public purposes” for the BBC, which form the 21st century reincarnation of a definition for Public Service Broadcasting.¹⁹ In a telling phrase about the reasoning for detailed licences, the White Paper stated that “our consultation indicated strong support, particularly among industry respondents, for service licences.” This was a major departure for the BBC whose flexibility and ability to vary its output according to audience demand has played a crucial role in its survival as a major cultural presence. Detailed service licences will inevitably inhibit that ability.

The second element is that all content must fulfil – and will be judged against – a range of five “public service characteristics”. These are defined as: high quality; challenging; original; innovative; and engaging. Every BBC programme or item of online content is required to demonstrate at least one of these public service characteristics. For the first time, then, every single element of BBC output – not just channels but also *individual* programmes – will be vulnerable to challenge by commercial rivals as well as members of the public for not meeting at least one of those criteria. The potential for mischievous or even malicious disputation is enormous, and the need for developing some kind of quantitative measure for each characteristic will probably become irresistible.

The third element of the “triple lock” is the most problematic of all: any new service or any “significant change” to an existing change must undergo a detailed scrutiny by the BBC Trust through a new “Public Value Test” [PVT]. The PVT itself has two components: a public value assessment carried out by

the Trust of the likely consumer and citizen benefits of the proposals; and a market impact assessment carried out by the commercial regulator Ofcom in conjunction with the Trust, according to methodologies agreed between them. For the first time in BBC history there is an explicit injunction to take into account not only the public interest but the commercial interest as well.

The net result of this “triple lock” will be, exactly as the term implies, to reduce the BBC’s flexibility in a changing competitive and technological environment. As competitors seek to pressurise the BBC Trust to implement the letter of the new system, the BBC will be less free to respond to cultural tastes and public needs. In the longer term, this is likely to diminish the BBC’s effectiveness: the key to its continuing success and survival has been precisely this ability to manoeuvre and stay relevant in response to changing audience demands and new technology.

The White Paper explicitly recognised the significance of this in its introduction to the Public Value Test: “the BBC will need the flexibility to adapt to the changing landscape and help shape audience expectations, with all the benefits that will deliver for individual licence fee payers and the industry alike”. But it immediately went on to explain why that flexibility needed to be curtailed: “But we are also committed to sustaining a vibrant, dynamic commercial sector. This means balancing the flexibility we will give to the BBC with strong measures to give the wider industry greater clarity and certainty about the BBC’s activities”.²⁰ The commitment to a vibrant and dynamic competitive environment has frequently been articulated by the government, in particular in the establishment of Ofcom and the drafting of the 2003 Communications Act. Despite its unequivocal commitment to a strong, publicly funded institutional presence for the BBC, the demands of the market-place have now been explicitly acknowledged as shaping its future.

Public opinion, the BBC Trust and the press

The real danger is that under pressure from the commercial sector the service licences and the public value test will become straitjackets which actually prevent the BBC from adapting its programme and online strategies to ensure that it remains central to British cultural life. For the commercial sector, the more the BBC is tied down to very specific output commitments and the less flexibility it has, the better for them. The corollary is that the more flexibility it is allowed to exercise, the more likely the BBC is to take decisions designed to make itself more popular, more accessible, more relevant and therefore a more formidable competitor. For a private company which has responsibilities to its employees as well as its shareholders, it is galling to have to compete with a major publicly funded institution with an apparently free rein to distribute £3 billion of public money. The balance has been tipped firmly towards recognition of those private sector arguments.

It is the new BBC Trust which now, for the first time in the BBC's history, is required to balance this delicate equation between the public interest and the industry's interest. In doing so it will be involved in three separate levels of public and very difficult decision-making: first, it will have to assess not just any new service which the BBC Executive is proposing, but whether there has been any "significant change" to an existing service which warrants an investigation. There are criteria laid down by the White Paper which provide benchmarks, but ultimately this is a negotiable definition. Second, it will have to determine in each case of service variation how it will conduct its Public Value Test, again an ultimately subjective and contestable area. And third, it will have to negotiate with Ofcom over the results of the Market Impact Study – a potentially volatile area of dispute given Ofcom's closer relationship with the commercial sector which it regulates.

These will be very public decisions, during which the Trust is likely to face enormous lobbying pressure from the commercial sector to be as restrictive as possible. It is, of course, mandated to represent the wishes of licence payers, and is equipped to undertake its own research. However, it will also have to contend with claims that public opinion is being "represented" by the press, which has already demonstrated a self-serving commercial agenda that has little to do with privileging the public interest. Virtually every newspaper now has its own online news site competing with the BBC's. Most newspapers are now part of larger media conglomerates with interests in broadcasting. Even when not directly affected by a competing BBC service, many print journalists are tempted to make unflattering comparisons between the cut-throat and precarious culture of a private press and the comparatively 'easy life' of a large, publicly funded and protected public institution. The net result is public opinion refracted through a press which is – with only one or two exceptions – instinctively hostile to a successful BBC.

Two illustrations of press antipathy to the BBC emerged during the consultation process. In an unprecedented joint submission to the review of the BBC White Paper, three major UK newspaper conglomerates – Associated Newspapers, News International, and the Telegraph Group – combined forces to express their "grave concern" over what they called the BBC's "digital empire-building". They called for a below inflation increase in the licence fee to "curtail the width of the BBC's remit in the digital arena".²¹ The submission was also signed by the Commercial Radio Companies Association and the Newspaper Society, representing the local and regional press.

One month earlier, the British Internet Publishers Alliance had questioned in its own response to the White Paper whether expanding the BBC's online and on-demand operations were an appropriate use of public money. The *Sun* – owned by Rupert Murdoch's News International – found this argument sufficiently profound to make a page 6 story and reported on 26th April that "The BBC was rapped last night over plans to revamp its website and cash in on the success of sites like MySpace.com". MySpace had recently been acquired by Murdoch's worldwide News Corporation. By a strange coincidence, the *Sun's*

leading article on the same day complained that the BBC “uses its gigantic £3 billion licence fee to compete with commercial radio, steal TV success stories and uses its vast resources on the cheap to imitate Sky TV”. Sky television, part of BSkyB, is another outpost of the News Corp empire.²²

The Trust will therefore need a great deal of determination to stand firm in the face of fierce attacks from commercial competitors, backed by large sections of the press who will be seeking to whittle away the BBC’s areas of activity and progressively to reduce its reach and influence. The sheer number and weight of forces that will be ranged against it – which in some cases will almost certainly include the powerful regulator Ofcom – will inevitably result in the BBC being denied opportunities to vary, extend, reinterpret or expand services in a manner that over the last 80 years helped to ensure its vitality at the heart of British culture. Throughout that time, the BBC was able to make a range of programmes and run a range of channels and stations catering for all tastes and interests and thereby ensured that it has not been marginalised. That scale, scope and influence will be under greater threat over the next ten years than ever before.

Conclusions: the long game

In his MacTaggart lecture at the Edinburgh International Television Festival in 2000, then BBC Director General Greg Dyke said: “Our competitors today are bigger, richer and more ruthless than at any time in the BBC’s history. They are increasingly part of a global media industry which has access to vast capital funds. This is competition on a scale that the BBC has never seen before” (2000: 231). Through its lobbying and its exploitation of its own press interests, that competition has succeeded in circumscribing the BBC’s activities. The BBC may have survived once again, but in ten years time it is likely that it will constitute a smaller, less significant presence. Ironically, this is not because of political or ideological hostility but because a generally well disposed government, speaking and legislating on behalf of a generally well disposed public, has felt obliged to compromise in the face of concerted corporate pressure from the BBC’s commercial rivals.

This does not bode well for nations where the political environment is less sympathetic or the public’s affection less marked. All public service broadcasters are being required to account for the expenditure of public money with greater urgency and with greater emphasis on “measurable” performance – a predictable and not unreasonable outcome of technological change and demands for accountability in public sector performance. These forces for change are, however, liable to be exploited by a commercial sector suffering the consequences of fierce competition and wishing to make inroads into markets which they regard as “protected” by public subsidy. Karol Jakubowicz has argued that “[s]upporters of the “attrition model” of PSB...are now on the offensive and may be very persuasive in convincing governments and policymakers that PSB is no longer

needed and should at least be significantly reduced in its scale of operation and impact on the market” (2006). In countries like the UK, where political and popular support for the public broadcaster is fairly entrenched, an explicit argument along these lines is more difficult to sustain. A more subtle approach is therefore required which in theory embraces the principles of public service but in practice persuades legislators to introduce conditions and qualifications that will severely constrain the broadcaster’s freedom of operation.

For the commercial sector this is the long game with the same end result: a progressively diluted and eventually marginalised public service presence. The risk is that as the output, presence and significance of the public broadcaster withers under these commercially dictated and politically imposed operational constraints, the idea itself will not survive. The flame, starved of oxygen, will die. Ten years ago Peter Humphreys argued that the American experience was an interesting reference point for Europe and pointed towards the marginalisation of public service provision and values in the US. He concluded: “More than ever, it would therefore appear, the future of the European public-service concept depends upon political resources of support that have never existed in the US” (1996:312). The progressive erosion of that political support in European states, under severe pressure from global media corporations, suggests that we may be heading down the American road.

Notes

1. Quoted in Public Service Broadcasting and the European Union: From ‘Amsterdam’ to ‘Altmark’: The Discussion on EU State Aid Regulation. Kleist, T. and Scheuer, A. In Nissen, C. (2006), p.167. See also Jakubowicz, K. in the same volume, p.40.
2. Speech to the Royal Television Society, 14 October 1998.
3. Speech to the Royal Television Society Cambridge Convention, 17 September 1999.
4. It is at least arguable that the Hutton report actually served to marginalise government voices which might otherwise have sought to diminish the BBC, and thus allowed its government supporters greater freedom to pursue their natural inclinations. For a more comprehensive argument along these lines see Barnett, S. (2005) pp.328-341.
5. *Review of the BBC’s Royal Charter*, consultation document published December 2003, Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), p.3.
6. *Ibid.*, p15.
7. BBC Royal Charter Review: An Analysis of Responses to the DCMS Consultation. *Ubiquitous Reporting*, June 2004, p.64.
8. *Review of the BBC’s Royal Charter: Response of British Sky Broadcasting (Sky)*. June 2004, p.3
9. Response to the DCMS Review of the BBC’s Royal Charter. *Emap*, December 2003, p.3
10. *BBC Charter Review: Submission from Channel 4*. Channel 4, undated; p.6
11. *ITN Response to the Review of the BBC’s Royal Charter*. ITN, March 2004, p.23.
12. *Review of the BBC’s Royal Charter: An IPA response*. March 2004, pp.3-4.
13. *BBC Charter Review: A Paper by the Commercial Radio Companies Association*. CRCA, p.4
14. *Qualitative Research to Inform the Preparation of the BBC Review 2004*. DCMS, April 2004, p.11.
15. *A Report on Deliberative Research to Support the DCMS Review of the BBC’s Royal Charter*. Corr Willbourn Research and Development, June 2004, p.13.

16. *Quantitative Research to Inform the Preparation of the BBC Charter Review 200.*: Report of a research study conducted for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. MORI, July 2004.
17. *Review of the BBC Royal Charter: A Strong BBC, Independent of Government* [The Government Green Paper]. DCMS, March 2005; p.2.
18. *A Public Service for All: The BBC in the Digital Age* [The BBC White Paper]. Cm 6763, DCMS, March 2006, p.46.
19. The six purposes are enshrined in the new Charter as defining the BBC's rationale as a publicly funded institution: sustaining citizenship and civil society; promoting education and learning; stimulating creativity and cultural excellence; representing the UK, its nations, regions and communities; bringing the UK to the world and the world to the UK; and building digital Britain.
20. *Ibid.*, p.28.
21. *BBC Charter Review: A Submission with Comments on the White Paper*. From Associated Newspapers Ltd, Commercial Radio Companies Association, News International, The Newspaper Society, The Telegraph Group Limited, DCMS, May 2006.
22. New BBC Copycat Website Rapped. *The Sun*, 26 April 2006, p.6. See also Bloated Beeb, *ibid.*, p.8.

References

- Barnett, S. (2005) Opportunity or Threat? The BBC, Investigative Journalism and the Hutton Report. In Allen, S. (ed.) *Journalism: Critical Issues*. London: Open University Press.
- Curran, J. (2002) *Media Power*. NY: Routledge.
- Dahlgren, P. (2000) Key Trends in European Television. In Wieten, J., Murdock, G. and Dahlgren, P. (eds.) *Television Across Europe: A Comparative Introduction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Dyke, G. (2000) A Time for Change. In Franklin, B. (ed.) *Television Policy: The MacTaggart Lectures*. UK: Edinburgh University Press.
- Etzioni-Halevy, E. (1987) *National Broadcasting Under Siege*. NY: Macmillan.
- Humphreys, P.J. (1996) *Mass Media and Media Policy in Western Europe*, UK: Manchester University Press.
- Jakubowicz, K. (2006) *PSB: The Beginning of the End, or a New Beginning in the 21st Century?* Keynote address for the RIPE@2006 Conference, Amsterdam, November 2006.
- Leys, C. (2001) *Market Driven Politics: Neoliberal Democracy and the Public Interest*. NY: Verso.
- Nissen, C.S. (2006). *Making a Difference: Public Service Broadcasting in the European Media Landscape*. UK: John Libbey Publishing.
- Splichal, S. (2006) Public Media in Service of Civil Society and Democracy. In Nissen, C.S. (ed.) *Making a Difference: Public Service Broadcasting in the European Media Landscape*. UK: John Libbey Publishing.
- Tracey, M. (1998) *The Decline and Fall of Public Service Broadcasting*. UK: Oxford University Press.
- Ward, D. 2003. State Aid or Band Aid? An Evaluation of the European Commission's Approach to Public Service Broadcasting. *Media, Culture and Society*, 25, pp.233-250.

Focus on Audiences

Public Service Media in the Market Place

Richard van der Wurff

The media landscape in Europe has become a commercial landscape in which markets, competition, commercial players and profit considerations play defining roles. These changes are most clearly visible in the television sector, but market forces and profit considerations have likewise gained importance in other media sectors. This chapter argues that the consequences of these changes can only be assessed on a case-by-case basis, for specific relevant markets and objectives. So far this has not been adequately done. Available evidence, however, indicates that media markets serve society-active citizens with relatively high incomes and high education much better than detached citizens with low income and low education. Public service broadcasting [PSB] should correct this market failure (Collins, 1998), but so far seems to serve the same audiences that are already well served by commercial media markets. Public service media [PSM], which includes radio and television but also indicates the transition to non-linear media, might shift the balance in positive ways by enabling a wider variety of targeted and generalist services. But that cannot happen without changes in professional perceptions and objectives inside these companies. And it cannot happen, either, unless government policy explicitly includes PSM mandates for PSB companies.

Media markets: Means and objectives

Marketization is the growing reliance on markets and market forces to serve media users' needs (see Murdock & Golding, 1999, for a critical discussion). Commercialisation is the growing dominance of commercial players with profit motive and efficiency considerations. These trends have triggered vigorous debate. Arguments in favour of marketization hinge on the claim that competition between profit-oriented media organisations brings about a media supply that reasonably well caters to consumer and advertiser demands. The counter argument maintains that the growing dominance of an economic and commercial logic drives out social-cultural and political-democratic considerations of

purpose and quality that hitherto gave media their social if not emancipatory significance (Collins, 1995; Brants & Siune, 1992).

This principled debate has gradually evolved into a more down-to-earth discussion about the concrete conditions under which specific media markets may perform well or instead fail in serving audience needs and societal objectives (e.g., Davies, 2004; Collins, 1998). Markets are important only really as co-ordination mechanism to induce media providers to serve as many needs as possible in an efficient and effective way. Markets may perform this co-ordinating role better or worse than other co-ordination mechanisms such as the command and control approach, characteristic of state broadcasting, or voluntary coordination, characteristic of community broadcasting. The 'better or worse' depends on specific characteristics of the media market in question and on the values and objectives for a media system. This in turn focuses attention on means and ends.

Means and ends

To discuss the role of markets in a relatively detached way, it is important to clearly distinguish between objectives and means. Stipulating the objectives that media markets should realise is pre-eminently a normative, and accordingly, a political question that cannot be left to markets. Media objectives encompass individual needs and consumer preferences, as well as the needs of a society overall. An important societal need is the long-term maintenance of society as a cohesive, integrated and democratic whole. Other societal needs include long-term economic progress and innovation, and cultural development (McQuail, 2005: 167).

These societal needs are no mere aggregation of individual needs and may even conflict with the preferences of many individuals. Consider for example the societal need that citizens be politically well-informed which may contrast with an individual need to block dissonant information, or an individual preference for infotainment. Another example is the potential conflict between consumer preferences for violent programming and society's need to reduce violence (Appelman et al., 2005). Societal needs must therefore be balanced with, and even against, individual needs and objectives, and accordingly translated via policy into specific media performance objectives, e.g., that media should not threaten social order and that media supply should be sufficiently diverse.

The question of whether, and under which conditions media markets can realize these objectives is subsequently a media-economic question. It requires the investigation of relationships between market structure, conduct and performance; that is, between 1) the structure of a given media market (i.e., the number of suppliers, cost structures, level of vertical integration), 2) the strategic behaviour of suppliers operating in that market (i.e., product, price and innovation strategies), and 3) the extent to which media supply on that market meets individual and societal demands (i.e., efficiency, innovativeness, quality, diversity). In a given society these analyses will likely show that some markets

perform well while other markets fail in delivering the required outcomes. When such failure does not follow from mistakes or accidents but rather is a logical and necessary outcome of the characteristics of the market, we can speak of market failure (Doyle, 2002: 64). In cases of market failure, society needs to employ other and additional co-ordination mechanisms alongside market forces, including regulation and in particular the public provision of media services (Davies, 2004; Collins, 1998).

The relevant market

The thrust of media-economic analyses is in correctly defining the relevant market. This is because, from a media-economic perspective, the impact of market forces on supply depends strongly on the concrete characteristics of the market. Appelman et al. (2005) point out that markets perform differently in terms of both quality and diversity depending on whether consumers or advertisers fund media. The impact of market forces on diversity and quality depends additionally on media cost structures, and on the degree to which consumers can assess the quality of media products. Depending on those conditions, competition on some media markets may result in 'haste work' and in others a 'tailored' offer (RMO, 2003). But these cannot be considered general impacts that occur on *every* media market in each society.

To determine the positive and negative impacts of market forces in specific cases, we must first define the 'relevant market'. Following the prevailing approach, a relevant market includes all products and services that are substitutes for consumers in terms of characteristics, prices and possibilities for use. Geographically, the relevant market includes all consumers that face the same products and suppliers, including potential new players that may start to compete with incumbent providers in providing relevant products and/or services to consumers (European Commission, 1997).

To define the boundaries of the market, a hypothetical question needs to be answered: What would happen if a supplier would raise the price of a product 5 to 10%? (European Commission, 1997). If the consumer would switch to another product or supplier, that product or supplier would be part of the relevant market. If, on the other hand, the consumer would not switch, other products or suppliers do not belong to the same market. For example, if a 10% increase in the subscription rate for the *Financial Times* would result in a shift of readers to the *Wall Street Journal* but not to the *Guardian* or BBC news, then the FT and the WSJ belong to the same relevant market but the Guardian and BBC news do not. It is obvious that in such a case research into the level of news competition and performance would produce different results compared to a situation where all those news media, and others besides, belong to the same relevant market.

New media and convergence are changing media substitutability, making the identification of market boundaries much more complex and greatly expanding the scope, scale and heterogeneity of relevant media markets. Since

market characteristics have a strong bearing on the identity and organisational structure of companies, and on the skills and expertise that are required to compete (Geroski, 1998), these developments are important for competition authorities and media organizations alike. As PSB develops into PSM to serve more and different markets, the management and operation of these companies become more complex and strategic design more demanding. At the same time, changes in market boundaries create opportunities for strategic innovation, focusing attention on new consumer needs or on new products and services that serve existing needs in fundamentally different and better ways (Geroski, 1998). Public service broadcasters' recognition of these challenges and opportunities account for the growing demand for management training, cross-media structures, and audience involvement.

Debating media markets: the Dutch case

The importance of defining the relevant market will be illustrated with a review of a recent media policy debate in the Netherlands. Three renowned advisory organisations – the Council for Societal Development [RMO], the Scientific Council for Government Policy [WRR], and the Review Committee for National Public Broadcasting – have published important policy papers that assess the consequences of convergence, marketization and commercialisation for media supply. Generally speaking, these papers argue that the boundaries between different media markets are blurring. Competition in these converging markets is expected to bring about a media supply that reasonably well caters to consumer and advertiser demands. Market forces and commercialisation, however, are less successful in realizing a number of overarching societal objectives (Visitatiecommissie, 2004; WRR, 2005). In areas where markets 'fail' additional and complementing policies are required. One area that merits our attention in particular is the provision of news and information where independence and quality cannot survive on the basis of market forces alone (WRR, 2005).

The advantage of these three reports is that they identify both positive and negative consequences of media marketization, an improvement on earlier discussions in which market enthusiasts and critics stood in sharp opposition (Van Vree et al., 2003: 71). The Scientific Council in particular makes an important contribution with its argument that media policy should focus on (the realisation of) the social functions of media (such as providing news and entertainment) rather than on individual media themselves (WRR, 2005; see also Van Cuilenburg & McQuail, 2003). If media functions might have been tied to media-specific types of content and media-specific distribution channels in the past, this is clearly not the case in the 21st century. Both informative and entertaining content are distributed by print, broadcasting and digital networks; and both types of content, distributed by whatever medium, may stir public opinion – a vital and traditional function of media.

Yet in the final analysis these reports lump together different types of users, and therefore different types of media markets, too indiscriminately, obscuring

the actual performance of media markets. Following the call of the Scientific Council for 'more precise diagnostics', analysis concludes that the next step for media policy makers is to combine the 'focus on functions' with a clear demarcation of specific audiences, as proposed in the Netherlands by the Public Broadcasting Review Committee (Visitatiecommissie, 2004). The same set of demands, i.e. to focus on functions and then demarcate markets from the audience perspective, is undoubtedly applicable in every national context. Of course the resulting market definitions should be expected to vary depending on local conditions, media history and structure, market players and dynamics, and regulatory requirements. But the need overall is of increasing importance everywhere, in particular if we want to fairly discuss the role and relevance of PSB and prospects for its transition to PSM.

Market forces, commercialisation and market failure

European media contents are increasingly sold on media markets. The realisation of media performance objectives therefore increasingly depends on the (often anonymous) operation of market forces. Better put: performance of the media sector depends increasingly on the strategic behaviour of commercial media organisations, which in turn is influenced and even determined by the structure of the media market.

An important market characteristic in this respect is audience demand or taste (WRR, 2005). The marketization of the media industry induces and even forces suppliers to increasingly tune their supply to meet the expressed needs of their audiences. This has resulted, amongst others, in a strong increase in the supply of commercial television programming; a programme supply that caters for a need that was historically neglected.

An improved match between media demand and supply is a desirable development but does not guarantee an *optimal* media supply for two reasons. Firstly, commercialisation and market failure may still result in an offer that insufficiently caters to the aggregated demands of individual media consumers. Secondly, and more fundamentally, even when supply perfectly matches the needs and tastes of individual media consumers this would not necessarily mean that supply is optimal from a societal point of view. We can briefly summarize the main problems and risks.

He who pays the piper calls the tune

Our point of departure is the familiar observation that commercial suppliers on media markets will only provide for the needs of audiences when those audiences (or advertisers on their behalf) are prepared to pay at least the costs of supplying the service. Especially when media production costs are high (e.g., in the case of movies), only those products are offered on the media market that attract a sufficiently large or prosperous audience. In that way market forces may

restrict the production of local cultural content (in this case Dutch movies or regional news) and reduce diversity of supply (Appelman et al., 2005). Moreover, when advertising revenues are important those media products are offered that are of interest to target groups as determined by advertisers. For these reasons, market forces may result in an offer that does not equally or adequately serve all the needs of the public either as consumers or citizens, or both.

Next, we must take into account that individual consumers are not always prepared to pay for the type and quality of media products considered desirable from a societal point of view. This raises the issue of so-called ‘merit goods’, which especially include cultural and political-informative programmes (Davies, 2004; Collins, 1998). These are valuable programmes for society but for which only few consumers are willing to pay. The opposite also occurs. Sometimes consumers are too willing to pay for media contents that have a negative social impact. Violent programmes are a clear example. So we are often dealing with the unintended consequences of free consumer choice in an age of abundance, others of which include fewer shared media experiences and a consumerist orientation preventing confrontations with dissident voices. This threatens social cohesion in the first instance and tolerance in the second (WRR, 2005). In sum, even when media supply perfectly matches the aggregated demand of individual media consumers, this is not by definition a supply that is optimal from a societal point of view. Moreover, the discrepancy between the offer that is adapted to individual tastes and the socially desirable offer is larger, as consumers take common interests less into account when choosing media services.

A third problem is that media consumers are not always able to adequately assess the quality of media contents (Davies, 2004). This is the problem of “asymmetrical information” (WRR, 2005), a traditional cause of market failure. The problem of asymmetrical information concerns, in particular, news and information programmes. For consumers it is virtually impossible to assess whether or when editorial independence and objectivity are sacrificed for the direct commercial interests of a programme supplier (e.g., advertisement income). The risk that editorial independence and quality are sacrificed is larger 1) when there are fewer competing suppliers that critically follow and review each others’ services; 2) when suppliers have less financial possibilities to invest in a quality reputation, and 3) when there is no public broadcasting news programme that sets a quality standard (Appelman et al., 2005; see also Collins, 1998 on public broadcasters setting quality thresholds).

So there are several reasons why market forces may cause or tempt media organizations to violate professional quality standards (WRR, 2005) to offer media contents that are requested and bought by individual consumers (in the short term) but damage (especially in the longer term) societal objectives – such as maintaining a well-informed, culturally developed and socially integrated society. It is in this sense that market forces do not produce a supply that is optimal for societal well-being, and media markets accordingly fail.

These problems strongly suggest the need for and value of PSM to complement and to countervail a purely market-driven media supply, to set quality

standards and benchmarks, and to improve our media futures. They also underline the importance of sufficient and independent funding for PSM. After all, PSM should by definition offer (merit) media products that, for several reasons, tend to be expensive to produce but do *not* attract sufficiently large or prosperous audiences. When PSM is too dependent on advertising funding, or when funding is too strongly and directly tied to ratings, PSM will be subjected to similar forces and constraints which contribute to market failure in the first place. This must prevent PSM from playing its necessary market-correcting role.

Convergence of media markets

How large the risks of undesirable commercialisation and market failure are, depends on several market characteristics. To be able to assess these risks well it is extremely important to carefully define what media market we are exactly considering. A familiar argument in this respect is that the borders between media and media markets are disappearing. This argument is heard in the Netherlands and in the broader European context today. The Council for Societal Development, for example, refers to the emergence of an “integrated media market” where all media compete with each other (RMO, 2003: 7). The Scientific Council is less conclusive and expresses some doubt concerning the extent to which media markets are actually converging. One of its basic arguments, nonetheless, is that different media increasingly fulfil the same functions. It will not astonish the reader that the Scientific Council, on the basis of this broad approach, reaches the conclusion that media supply is relatively diverse and includes a substantial number of high-quality products, whereas the Council for Societal Development observes that from its perspective competition on the integrated media market is intense.

Media-economic research suggests that different media are not substitutes for users but instead perform different functions and therefore cannot replace each other (e.g., Dutta-Bergman, 2004; Stempel III, 2000; Schönbach, 1997; Bromley, 1995). Only in those infrequent cases when an entirely new medium enters the market do shifts in media use occur because at those moments consumers and suppliers must reconsider the role and functions of each individual medium in the total media supply mix (Stöber, 2004; Dimmick & Rothenbuhler, 1984). The role and use of newspapers changed accordingly when first radio and then television became available. This does not mean, however, that newspapers have become interchangeable with radio or television. On the contrary, providers attempt to reduce the substitutability of different media as much as possible to prevent competition on the media market becoming too intense. Media suppliers do not aim for substitutability but rather offer complementing contents via different media channels (Appelman et al., 2005: 39).

A long-term analysis of media use in the Netherlands confirms that media do not replace each other at any given moment in time. Replacement only occurs in the long term following introductions of new media and as audiences get

used to these new media (Huysmans et al., 2004) – i.e., as it loses its newness. Although different media might be considered as competitors on an abstract, long-term, integrated media market, in practice different media are not substitutes for users. Instead, users prefer and choose different media for different purposes under different conditions and at different times. This means that public service media should not be prevented in using any available medium from the outset if PSM is to prevent and compensate occurring market failures. Confining public service provision to radio and television undoubtedly means that important specific and broader society needs *cannot* be met in the future total media landscape.

Target-group specific markets

Analyses also show major variations in the degree to which different parts of the population use combinations of media (Huysmans et al., 2004). By and large, higher educated and higher income audiences use more variety of media (including print media and the Internet) and consult more varied information sources when compared with lower educated/income audiences. Viewed the other way round, lower educated groups watch more television and, in particular, more commercial television than higher educated audiences.

Other authors distinguish with different variables. Graas (2003), for example, in a background study for the Council for Societal Development, distinguished four types of citizens that government should approach in different ways. One type consists of socially critical and responsible citizens that can be reached via many different media; another type includes outsiders and inactive citizens who can best be reached via commercial television. Broeders and Verhoeven (2005), in an exploratory study for the Scientific Council, distinguish users on the basis of their media use repertoires and identify, amongst others, a group of citizens with lower and middle education that listens in particular to commercial radio and views commercial television. Finally, the Public Broadcasting Review Committee warned that 9.2 million people threaten to turn their backs on public service broadcasting in the Netherlands, including in particular people only marginally active or involved in society.

These data suggest that the increase in media and media supply, praised by the Scientific Council, benefits in particular those people that are already well-informed and use several media. Next to this group of multiple media users we find groups for whom different media are neither substitutes nor complements. Actual media use here is much more limited than could be grasped from the total media supply.

These differences indicate that in defining a relevant media market we must distinguish not only between different functions of media but also between different target groups (or segments) for whom the same functions are fulfilled by various media. Such a target group-specific approach has already been suggested for the public broadcaster by the Public Broadcasting Review Committee and has also been advocated by Broeders and Verhoeven (2005: 112). In my view,

a definition of media markets in terms of functions *and* target groups needs to be the starting point for an ongoing monitoring of media market forces and performance (as proposed by the Scientific Council).

When we consider media supply in the aggregate, there seems to be a plethora of media services and a diminishing need for PSM. This, however, is a misrepresentation. When we define relevant markets properly, in terms of social functions and particular audiences, media-economic analysis will show that supply on some markets is too limited and that market forces alone do not optimise supply for societal well-being. PSM have a role to play on these markets. However, analyses of relevant markets will likely show that PSB, so far, tends to play a larger role on markets where market failure might be less severe. The proposed analysis therefore necessitates a stronger focus and perhaps reorientation of PSM towards hitherto underserved audiences and functions.

Media policy and public service

This chapter cannot run ahead of the results of such a function- and target group-specific media market monitoring. Nonetheless and on the basis of material presented, the hypothesis can be formulated that media markets that serve higher educated audiences perform better than markets that serve lower educated audiences. It is especially on this latter type of market that we will find the conditions that lead to commercialisation and market failure: insufficient purchasing power; a discrepancy between individual and common interests (possibly resulting in consumption of too few merit goods and too many goods with negative societal impacts); and a lack of expertise to assess media products on their merits. In practice this means that, for example, an independent news service is better guaranteed for higher than for lower educated audiences – if we limit the analysis in each case to news services that are true alternatives for a particular audience. A similar conclusion should hold for other media functions (raising public opinion, providing specific information, artistic and cultural content, or even entertainment).

Government policy that aims to strengthen the role of users in the media sector (WRR, 2005; RMO, 2003) can solve these problems only partly. The same applies to the solution to make media publicly accountable for their conduct and performance (ibid). Both types of policy require a knowledgeable user who receives information from different perspectives and sources – and thus from different competing media – in determining how actual conduct and performance of media relates to shared societal objectives. Given the argument presented in this chapter, it is unlikely that such a knowledgeable and well-informed user exists in all media markets.

It is, moreover, a significant question as to whether and to what extent individual users in media markets are prepared to adapt their media behaviour voluntarily in ways that secure societal objectives will be realized. Experience with environmental policy suggests, for example, that the alignment of individual

and societal objectives requires in many cases a far more binding and even coercive government role. Options for government involvement in the media sector discussed in the Netherlands include proposals to make the editorial charter obligatory (RMO, 2003), measures to protect privacy (WRR, 2005), and suggestions to regulate socially undesirable media contents (Appelman et al., 2005). An important role remains for public broadcasting.

Public service media

If the argument presented holds, a strengthening of the role of public service media (especially in television and the Internet) with respect to lower educated audiences is necessary. The public broadcaster should formulate reach and quality objectives for underserved target groups, as recommended by the Public Broadcasting Review Committee in the Netherlands. Serving higher educated audiences could be left more easily to the market. This might even include news services. If and when higher educated users remain interested in high-quality news, and if and when there is sufficient competition between news providers so that informed users are able to assess the independence and quality of news services, there is no factual reason to assume that the market cannot provide good news services for this higher educated target group. Of course, higher educated audiences may also underconsume merit goods, and serving news to those audiences may be crucial to maintain public support for PSM, or important to strengthen the quality of democratic discourse overall. However, general arguments that a public news service is necessary to guarantee the independence and quality of news services (Visitatiecommissie, 2004; WRR, 2005) cannot be taken for granted but needs further qualification and support. On the other hand, if we agree that public service media should play a strong role on function – and target group-specific markets that perform at sub optimal levels, it is quite possible we would conclude that the public service provider should not only offer news, information and culture, but also entertainment. The primary reason would not only be that entertainment is necessary to increase the reach of public merit programming – the main argument in favour of PSB entertainment programming proposed by the Scientific Council and also discussed in the recent book from Nissen (2006). A more fundamental argument in line with this chapter is that entertaining content increasingly fulfils news, information, public opinion and cultural functions for sizeable audiences. This means that PSM likely must serve entertaining content – with a news function – to correct market failure on some news function markets. Besides, a target group-specific monitoring of entertainment markets will probably show that a number of these markets delivers insufficient quality and diversity. PSM should play a role to correct these ‘failing’ entertainment markets, too.

Arguing that PSM should correct and compensate for market failure on function- and audience-specific markets where failure actually occurs implies that specific policy and strategic targets should be set per function and audience. A ‘one size fits all’ approach, by offering one undifferentiated national news service

or aiming for X per cent of the population, is not adequate. Quantitative and quality aims should moreover reflect the characteristics of specific markets and acknowledge the prevailing extent of market failure. The more market failure, the more necessary a PSM offer is but also the more difficult (and frequently expensive) it will be to remedy that market failure. For example, when developing a quality news service for a target group that hardly uses any news, a modest quantitative aim seems in order. In qualitative terms, it is necessary to define specifically what quality news means, both from the perspective of this specific target group as well as from the perspective of society at large.

Accordingly, public service providers should seize upon the emergence of new media to develop a wide variety of differentiated services, choosing different media and different outlets to target different audiences and functions. The societal perspective requires at the same time that these differentiated services have a common core and thereby create a public space that is shared by as large a proportion of society as possible. From an economic perspective, PSM providers that use different media and differentiate services where necessary should at the same time realise economies of scope and scale where possible. Thereby they can solve market failures where they are the most detrimental in a cost-effective way.

Conclusions

The plea to expand public service broadcasting into public service media – that is to use different media to serve different audience and functions, including entertainment, where markets alone cannot serve these functions and audiences in an optimal way – touches on the core problem of marketization and commercialisation of media industries. Marketization and commercialisation create a media supply that increasingly caters to the demand and tastes of some groups of individual consumers. Unfortunately such a supply is not necessarily optimal from a societal and long-term point of view because individual and societal interests do not necessarily run parallel. Government regulation can solve this problem partly. Regular consultation between media providers and (organisations of) users on the social responsibility of media should play a role, too. On top of this, there continues to be a task for public service providers to produce contents that are attractive to individuals and, at the same time, bring the realisation of societal objectives closer.

Which particular media markets are prone to fail cannot be determined in the abstract, or once and for all. It depends on the particular characteristics of a market in combination with the particular set of objectives that media are expected to realise. Assessing these issues requires, in a media-economic perspective, a clear definition of the relevant market. This chapter supports the argument made by the Scientific Council for Government Policy in the Netherlands and others, that these market definitions cannot be phrased in exclusive media terms any more. It is not feasible to define and investigate a newspaper

market or a magazine market in the 21st century. Instead, we should 'focus on functions' and take specific media functions as the starting point for market definitions. But that alone is not sufficient.

When focusing on functions we must acknowledge that different media perform different functions for different audiences. That has been illustrated in this chapter for audiences with lower versus higher education. Other classifications are of course possible, as also briefly discussed. When investigating a media market, we should consequently focus on *functions for audiences* to define the relevant media market as including all media products that perform the same function for a specific audience. Only such analyses will show to what extent media markets are useful means to co-ordinate media provider behaviour and bring about a media supply that serves individual and societal needs, and also identify where there is market failure and need for more merit good supply in society's total best interests.

References

- Appelman, M., Dijk, M. van, Nahuys, R., Vollaard, B., and Waagmeester, D. (2005) *Een Economisch Vooronderzoek ten Behoeve van het Rapport van de WRR over de Media* [Preliminary economic study for the WRR report on media]. In van de Donk, W.B.H.J., Broeders, D.W.J. & Hoefnagel, F.J.P.M. (eds.), *Trends in het Medialandschap: Vier Verkenningen*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Brants, K., and Siune, K. (1992) Public Broadcasting in a State of Flux. In Siune, K. and Truetschler, W. (eds.) *Dynamics of Media Politics*. London: Sage.
- Broeders, D.W.J., & Verhoeven, I. (2005) Kiezen uit Overvloed. Sociaal-Culturele Ontwikkelingen in Vraag en Aanbod in het Medialandschap [Choice from abundance. Social-cultural developments in demand and supply in the media landscape]. In van de Donk, W.B.H.J., Broeders, D.W.J. & Hoefnagel, F.J.P.M. (eds.), *Trends in het Medialandschap: Vier Verkenningen*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Brown, A. (1996) Economics, Public Service Broadcasting, and Social Values. *Journal of Media Economics*, 9(1), 3-15.
- Bromley, R., V., & Bowles, D. (1995) Impact of Internet on Use of Traditional News Media. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 16(2), pp. 14-27.
- Collins, R. (1995) Reflections across the Atlantic: Contents and Complementarities in Broadcasting Policy in Canada and the European Community in the 1990s. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 20(4), pp. 483-504.
- Collins, R. (1998) Public Service and the Media Economy. *Gazette* 60(5), pp. 363-376.
- Cuilenburg, J. van, & McQuail, D. (2003) Media Policy Paradigm Shifts Towards a New Communications Policy Paradigm. *European Journal of Communication*, 18(2), 181-207.
- Davies, G. (2004) *Economics and the BBC Charter*. Lecture at the Saïd Business School, Oxford, 10 June 2004. Retrieved August 6, 2007, from <http://www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/news/archives/Main/Economics and the BBC Charter.htm>
- Dimmick, J., & Rothenbuhler, E. (1984) The Theory of the Niche: Quantifying Competition Among Media Interests. *Journal of Communication*, 34, pp. 109-119.
- Doyle, G. (2002) *Understanding Media Economics*. London: Sage.
- Dutta-Bergman, M.J. (2004) Complementarity in Consumption of News Types Across Traditional and New Media. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 48(1), pp. 41-60.
- European Commission (1997) Commission Notice on the Definition of Relevant Market for the Purposes of Community Competition Law. *Official Journal* (C 372) [Electronic version, Celex database].

- Geroski, P.A. (1998) Thinking Creatively about Markets. *International Journal of Industrial Organization*, 16(6), pp. 677-695.
- Graas, D. (2003) Alleen Kijken: Achtergrondstudie Naar Mediagebruik en Meningsvorming in Nederland [Only watching. Study of media use and opinion in the Netherlands]. In Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling (ed.), *Medialogica. Over het Krachtenveld Tussen Burgers, Media en Politiek*. Den Haag: Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling (RMO) / Sdu Uitgevers.
- Huysmans, F., Haan, J. de, and Broek, A. van den (2004) *Achter de Schermen: Een Kwart Eeuw Lezen, Luisteren, Kijken en Internetten* [Behind the screen. 25 Years reading, listening, viewing and internet use]. Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau.
- McQuail, D. (2005) *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory* (5th ed.). London: Sage.
- Murdock, G., and Golding, P. (1999). Common Markets: Corporate Ambitions and Communication Trends in the UK and Europe. *Journal of Media Economics*, 12(2), pp. 117-132.
- Nissen, C. (2006) *Making a Difference: Public Service Broadcasting in the European Media Landscape*. Eastleigh, UK: John Libbey Publishing.
- Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling (RMO) (2003) *Medialogica: Over het Krachtenveld Tussen Burgers, Media en Politiek* [Media logic. On the interplay of forces between citizens, media and politics]. Den Haag: Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling (RMO) / Sdu Uitgevers.
- Schönbach, K. (1997) *Zeitungen in den Neunzigern: Faktoren ihres Erfolgs*. Bonn: ZV Zeitungsverlag Service GmbH.
- Stempel III, G.H., Hargrove, T., and Bernt, J.P. (2000) Relation of Growth of Use of the Internet to Changes in Media Use from 1995 to 1999. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 77(1), pp. 71-79.
- Stöber, R. (2004) What Media Evolution Is: A Theoretical Approach to the History of New Media. *European Journal of Communication*, 19(4), pp. 483-505.
- Visitatiecommissie Landelijke Publieke Omroep (2004) *Omzien Naar de Omroep* [Looking back after public broadcasting]. Hilversum: Visitatiecommissie Landelijke Publieke Omroep.
- Vree, F. van, Vos, C., Wijfjes, H., and Bardoel, J. (2003) Het Ontstaan van Een Politiek-Publicitair Complex: 1960-2002 [The emergence of a political-publicity complex. 1960-2002]. In Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling (ed.), *Medialogica. Over het Krachtenveld Tussen Burgers, Media en Politiek*. Den Haag: Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling (RMO) / Sdu Uitgevers.
- Wetenschappelijke raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR) (2005) *Focus op Functies. Uitdagingen voor Een Toekomstbestendig Mediabeleid* [Focus on functions. Challenges for a future-proof media policy]. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

The Public Service Entertainment Mission

From Historic Periphery to Contemporary Core

Teemu Palokangas

The definition of public service broadcasting should be “short and obscure”. That was how Seppo Niemelä, Chairman of the Finnish parliamentary committee preparing an update of the 1993 Act on YLE (since legislated in 2005), summarised the committee’s task in a 2004 seminar about dilemmas in public service broadcasting [PSB]. Although meant as a humorous adaptation of the quote by Napoleon Bonaparte (who famously said, “A constitution should be short and obscure”), it acknowledges a defining challenge for public service companies everywhere in recent years. The broad guidelines for public service operators set by domestic legislators and regulators (or as recommended by international organisations including UNESCO and the EBU) are put to practice by respective public service companies making strategic choices that are framed by internal traditions and the operational environment. The laws and charters that define public service broadcasting are inadequate for the practical interpretations needed to govern programme policy, commissioning and prioritising content genres. Much of what these companies have to work with is too short and too obscure to be of any real help in meeting practical, current requirements.

Despite similarities in general dynamics, the particulars are of course quite varied in different countries and due to historic circumstance. And although ambiguity can be beneficial in the sense that a system of looser control assures the flexibility needed to develop and adapt, at the same time we need to acknowledge that the complexity of new platforms combined with globalisation and multiculturalism, plus increasing competition, makes such ambiguity problematic. That is especially the case in development initiatives because that work always requires higher than usual clarity, in this case meaning a crystal clear understanding of what public service media [PSM] means and how it should be done in the emerging environment. Any lack of clarity will raise process inefficiency (wasting time and money) and lower effectivity in results.

This lack of clarity has long been especially problematic for entertainment programming in the PSB context. Entertainment is often seen as an area handled well and profitably by commercial broadcasters. Their lobbies argue that public

service companies should concentrate on correcting market failures and stick to genres and services that are not commercially viable. That is mainly confined to current affairs, high culture, and educational programmes. From the commercial perspective entertainment programmes produce the large audiences that are a profitable mass market, and therefore public service entertainment engages in ‘unfair competition’ that causes ‘market distortion’.

In this chapter we focus on the role of entertainment in the full service template that characterises PSB provision historically, and of keener import in the PSM context now taking shape. We shall critique the functional and instrumental frames typically applied to justify PSB entertainment programming, and ultimately argue that entertainment content is fundamental to the public service *mission* complete and entire. We begin by acknowledging that it is complicated to justify the PSB entertainment mission in today’s complex and highly competitive conditions, but take encouragement from the fact that answers are beginning to appear in response to contemporary demands. One can take heart that PSB companies are not surrendering the entertainment mission to commercial operators. On the contrary, together with information and education, entertainment is (and finally) increasingly understood as an essential part of doing and being a fully human service for the public/s (EBU, 2002: 39).

Commitment to entertainment content development is typically associated with full scale PSB programming. That commitment puts public broadcasters in a paradoxical position, however. As Christian Nissen – former Director General of DR who acted as the chairman of the EBU’s Digital Strategy Group – concluded in his recent publication (2006), the paradox requires balancing the demand for “high reach” programming with the demand for distinctive programming. PSB needs high reach programming to be relevant to all citizens and to promote social cohesion, but it needs to provide distinctive content of clear public value to serve specific needs of the individual citizen and be considered a legitimate public service operator (ibid: 66-67). In his view, going too far in either direction amounts to strategic suicide. Here the issues under debate are understood as strategically crucial. Managing the balance between popularity and distinctiveness is also a practical issue. Former head of the EBU Legal Department, Werner Rumphorst, made the case (2007) that large audiences for popular programmes enable an adequate audience for more specialised programming.

A more clearly defined role for public service entertainment

The public service mission has been formulated in similar terms across Europe since national broadcasting companies were chartered in the 1920s and 1930s. Together with a mandate to inform and to educate, they have always been mandated to entertain as an integral role in the public service mission. Although public service broadcasters are transforming their organisations into public service media companies as a condition for success in today’s increas-

ingly competitive and digital media market, this tripartite role defining the PSB mission remains foundational. Accelerating change in the media environment and organisational conditions combine to prioritise questions about what the historic mission means for, in and to PSM. The changes can be stipulated as three broad, overlapping areas impacting the media environment, changes which are especially relevant to the notion of entertainment in relation to public service media.

First, the public service orientation is changing from an emphasis on production to a focus on content. As Hujanen (2003: 133-135) argued, the on-going digitalisation of television accelerates the transformation of public service organisations which have been historically construed as production-oriented culture institutions into organisations increasingly defined by programming-oriented culture industries. For Hujanen the uniqueness of public service as a distinctive type of production is being replaced by public service understood as a brand. The importance of content and the way that is packaged for different platforms has already brought new areas of expertise to centre stage. Such include profiling channels, scheduling strategies, information design and navigation architecture, and so forth. This obviously applies to channels but also to individual programmes because they are the 'building blocks' of the public service brand. Public service entertainment reflexively requires and is required for a market-facing and branded identity.

Second, the larger frame of reference that grounds understanding of media is changing from a view that mainly favours the critique of mass culture to an appreciation of popular culture. In this shift the interpretative power of the audience in individualistic membership is privileged. For the European public service model with its roots in the climate of mass culture critique (Born 2004) and built on a foundation of paternalism keyed to the ideals of Enlightenment, this implies a profound change in both perspective and logic. Rethinking the entertainment role of public service is now beginning. In the process any failure to revitalise our understanding of the role of public service entertainment would be mindless because it would either preserve the paternalistic approach of no escapism, no emotionality, and no excess – a 'no-no-no' approach doomed to implosion – or too readily collapse into an approach wherein 'anything goes' – also doomed because it would destroy PSB distinctiveness. In short, utilising the PSM mission requires one to deeply consider, theorise and strategise about what public service entertainment means, why it matters, and how it works.

Third, the emphasis on public service media as platforms for unique artisan work distributed to the whole nation is already being marginalised. That happens due to the more standardised, formatted, and generic content that is increasingly commissioned and scheduled by a production management steered by the application of scheduling rules keyed to segmenting audiences and handling segments. As public service organisations become more enmeshed in processes of commissioning programmes from internal and external production units, understanding public service ideals is managerialised, marketized and ultimately can be marginalised.

All of these changes in the environment imply sharp need for fresh understandings of public service entertainment to facilitate its development, distinctiveness, popularity and promotion. The uniqueness of public service as a brand can't be promoted through negations, i.e. defining public service entertainment by what it is not. This realisation has consequences for many discrete but interdependent areas of public service operation, including modes of production, the relation of entertainment to other television genres and their interaction, PSM development, thematic choices in programming, the social and cultural roles of entertainment, and the types of decision-making tools used by managers and commissioners for entertainment content acquisition.

PSB rhetoric offers little support for PSM entertainment

One of the key questions for public service organisations has always been how to incorporate entertainment as part of an undertaking so deeply rooted in the ideas, ideals and objectives of Enlightenment. Providing information and education for citizens is the heart of the paradigm where public service feels comfortably at home. Entertainment doesn't sit as easily in the rationale of Enlightenment traditions. To illustrate, in the public service definition offered by UNESCO (2007) the role of PSB is summarised as the "cornerstone of democracy". The definition says "also entertainment" is an area in which public service is operating, but that is offered little support. It is an aside acknowledgement of fact but no clear indication of support. Acting as a cornerstone of democracy suggests little room for 'mere' entertainment.

The enlightenment tradition referred to here is mainly a philosophical project (Rorty 2001: 19) with an emphasis on reason and rationality. As such, enlightenment is foundational to the ideals of public service broadcasting. The old but not outdated definition of enlightenment by Immanuel Kant is indicative (1784): "Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another. This immaturity is self-imposed when its cause lies not in lack of understanding, but in lack of resolve and courage to use it without guidance from another. *Sapere Aude!* Have courage to use your own understanding! – that is the motto of enlightenment." In this view the enlightenment mission of public service companies has focused on 'giving to' people the information and tools needed to think for themselves and to act as enlightened citizens. Public service as a mediating institution in the public sphere assists people out of their immaturity (Collins, 2004:44).

As Richard Collins argues, Kantian thought is clearly influential in the definition of public service formulated by the BBC's founding Director General, Sir John Reith, and similarly reflected in the ideas of Reith's successors and proponents (ibid: 44-45). This is highly relevant to the tradition of European public service broadcasting. Despite differences in the ways that public service

organisations have been established in different European countries, there are philosophical family traits.

Reith reputedly felt distaste for American commercial broadcasting and defined the BBC system in a late 19th century progressive spirit by emphasising the social, cultural, educative and moral aspects of the public service approach to broadcasting (Born, 2004). This framework would become a model for most European public broadcasters and continues to have pervasive importance. Reith did note a role for entertainment, but this was under-emphasised in comparison with the nearly sacred importance of information and education. Reith's views were linked with ideas familiar in the critique of mass culture exercised at the time. In the BBC the early tone of entertainment was essentially 'middle-brow' as it was aimed at socialising citizens, providing educating and 'wholesome relaxation' for the working-class, and at the same time avoiding excess (ibid: 29). It was also understood as a 'necessary evil'; a little sugar makes the medicine go down. As discussed in more detail soon, the audience would have to be amused to open doors for the good work undertaken to lend wings to their better angels.

Similar formulations were put forward by YLE which was established in Finland in 1926. YLE was mandated primarily to educate and inform, but should also "provide refining and innocent entertainment" (Lyytinen, 1996: 31, translation TP). The potential harmfulness of entertainment is implicit in those early formulations of the mission, a feature rooted in more general Enlightenment conceptions of entertainment. The responsibility for drawing the line separating the 'innocent' from the 'excessive' was afforded to public broadcasters as guardians of higher standards of taste in the name of public consensus (c.f. McDonnel, 1991: 1-3).

The enlightenment tradition is so deeply rooted that it is even today expressed in the discourse of audiences talking about viewing choices (c.f. Alasuutari, 1992, and also Mäntymäki, 2006). Watching factual programmes and not watching entertainment programmes needs little justification, whereas watching entertainment programmes and not watching factual programmes prompts Finns, at least, to give detailed explanations. This value hierarchy that is evident in Finnish audience discourse not only reflects the implicit respect for 'enlightening' factual programmes and disrespect for genres like soap operas; it also shows how the question of programme taste is a product of gender and education. The collective values that people evince in value discourse closely reflect the values of the proto-typical educated male. Thus, the Enlightenment tradition with its associated *paternalism* still guides people's understanding about what public service is and how it ought to be, as well as the traditional view inside PSB companies.

From this perspective entertainment is associated with emotions, escapism and pleasure and can be seen as something that works against enlightenment, or at least as something potentially harmful in and to the public service context. It is not surprising to therefore note that in the earlier monopoly environment European public service companies chose to prioritise information and educa-

tion over entertainment, and rather often by a far distance (Collins, 2004: 45). Entertainment was understood mainly as a means to an end, and that end was the achievement and growth of Enlightenment. Entertainment might be necessary but it was little respected. Information and education were the noblesse oblige of PSB professionals. This failure to accommodate the popular and humanistic importance of entertainment, and the other-than-political aspects of broadcasting more generally, was problematic even in the monopoly period. But it made public service companies very vulnerable to competitor successes when monopoly ended.

National public service monopolies established as anti-American, pro-citizen and even anti-consumerist institutions, were thus thoroughly unequipped to deal with increasingly robust American, commercial and global influences that have reshaped the broadcast markets of Europe these past twenty years and more. Their ideological predisposition rendered them strategically unaware, conceptually unarmed and operationally unprepared. The reshaping is still a work in progress and lately accelerated by the digitalization of television and the rapid emergence of the web as a platform where public service companies must be active. The Enlightenment template with its ambivalence about entertainment combined with growing competition and suspicion about EU-level politics towards public service media (Collins, 2004: 36) is likely to promote a situation where public service entertainment remains a target of sharp critique. But to break out and re-position successfully in today's competitive media environment, and significantly to do so in ways that preserve public service legitimacy, entertainment must be redefined precisely in terms of Enlightenment because that remains foundational and it still has currency and value. Public service media thinkers are thus called to reconceptualise Enlightenment values in and for a modern digitized, globalized, competitive and multicultural Europe.

Instrumentality and the narrow definition of entertainment

As an almost inevitable consequence of the lack of support for the entertainment role in defining the public service mission, entertainment has most often been justified as an instrumental means for achieving the more elevated public service tasks of informing and educating. This was hinted above but is now tackled directly. It is important to understand that this instrumental logic builds core-periphery thinking; it trends the tendency to harness 'mere' entertainment to serve some higher purpose considered more central to public service ideology. This instrumentality has two different dimensions.

First and most evidently, instrumentality functions at a programme level. Many entertainment programmes on public service channels scoop material – characters and topics – from the informative domain of wider company operations, i.e. from news, current affairs and factual programmes. Entertainment acts as another interface for securing public attention presumably first established by factual programming. This is partly why satire sits so well in

public service entertainment as perhaps the only ‘legitimate’ form of such entertainment – and really as the heartland of public service entertainment. Some programme level solutions have clearly expressed this as an ideal form, for example in the format of *Have I Got News for You* that was originally produced for the BBC and is now broadcast in localised versions by many public service companies around Europe. *Have I Got News for You* is media satire featuring known politicians, media professionals and artists; it is a ‘carnival of the serious’ that easily finds its place in public service television. Programmes ‘carnevalising’ the public sphere, media and the news agenda are generally uncontested as an integral part of public service programming and thus not so easily targeted by critics.

In Finland, YLE TV1 which is strategically intended to be the more serious and factual oriented of the company’s two generalist channels has featured such programmes as part of its routine prime-time schedule. Such satire is fruitfully reactive to current affairs and politics, in particular. In this way TV1 has built critical and popular success via programmes belonging to the genre categories of political satire and media parody. While this is a way of producing good entertainment programmes with a public service thumbprint or signature, it needs to also be understood that this is a restrictive approach. It isn’t really sufficient to claim that public service entertainment ought to be reduced only to political and media satire which comments on the daily or weekly news issues shown in the informative domain. If that is the case then most entertainment programmes aired on public service channels today must, in fact, fall outside the domain of a properly public service character. That is a slippery slope inherent (if not so apparent) in argumentation favouring such satire and parody as proper public service entertainment to any exclusive degree.

In an analysis of the entertainment output of the five major television channels in Finland (Palokangas, 2006) the most striking difference between public service and commercial entertainment was in the *way* they were involved in the public and private domains. YLE entertainment mainly featured topics and characters from the public sphere with heavy emphasis on the news agenda, whereas commercial entertainment focused on topics of private life and featured characters previously unknown to viewers. While providing an interesting example of how public service entertainment is more concerned with public issues and publicly known people, this instrumentality again indicates a fairly restrictive strategy.

Second, entertainment is often instrumental as a tool for reaching the mass or popular audience in order to legitimate the public service operation overall. As Georgina Born (2004: 29) noted in her account of BBC history, the BBC’s real commitment to entertainment as an essential part of programming came from the realisation that “to achieve its complex ends, the BBC must attract a mass audience and must be truly popular”. But in those early days, as she also suggests, it was not offered only to lure viewers on to better things (i.e. the treat before the meat) but actually with the realisation that entertainment is also what the fee-paying public is paying to receive – and to enjoy. Despite

criticisms, this early realisation has remained at the centre of the BBC's strategy to the present day (ibid: 62-64).

Similar formulations were articulated in the final report of the EBU's Digital Strategy Group (2002: 39):

Securing a substantial 'reach' (i.e. a considerable part of those listening to radio or watching television must visit the public service channels) is essential for public service broadcasters, if they are to perform their tasks properly. A broadcaster, whose channels are only used by a minority, is not serving the whole public and not fulfilling its obligations. To retain such a reach, in a landscape with other broadcasters, public broadcasters have to offer popular programming, encompassing entertainment, sports, movies, and so on.

Entertainment is something public service companies have to offer in order to reach the popular audience. This dimension of instrumentality is most vulnerable to critique because it implies that entertainment is only a tool and purely a means to an end without suggesting any redeeming public service value in and of its self. Logically, then, it could be provided by commercial operators just the same. Understanding entertainment as having a mainly tool-based, instrumental value can only serve in the defence of PSB as an institution; it cannot contribute anything of significance to the mission per se. Merely defending the organisation as a company is arguably only self-serving in complexion and implication. It suggests no convincing value-based argument. It also provides no way of evaluating public service entertainment in its own right. In plain words, by this route public service companies are justifying entertainment as a way of reaching large-scale audiences for mainly self-serving interests without asking if what is offered is substantively in line with public service ideals based on public service values. That is the slipperiest of slippery slopes.

In a situation where alternatives to license fee funding in particular, and the public service definition more generally, are constantly proposed (c.f. Wessberg, 2005), the wise course is to assess public service entertainment in ways and to degrees that establish this as something essential to the universal, full service role that public service media must continue to provide in the future. Drawing on Christian Nissen's (2005) analogy, the "public service nun" that once came out of the chapel and established her role in the competitive marketplace is now being pushed back inside the chapel not only by commercial operators but also by politicians at national and EU levels, and even by domestic cultural elite. To keep the public service nun in touch with the public she must serve requires developing more and better tools, as well as convincing argumentation. All of that is crucial for evaluating the entertainment role in the public service mission by other than merely instrumental means.

The functional dimension – supplementing the entertainment mission

At the outset of this chapter reference was made to the work of a parliamentary committee seeking to renew the law governing YLE in Finland. It is useful to return to that process for an example of tensions connected to the role of entertainment as part of the public service remit. In the final report of the committee (Niemelä et al, 2004: 40), a key conclusion is relevant:

Entertainment is an important form of expression and there has been a lot of discussion whether it should be included as part of the public service mission or not. The committee sees that entertainment is part of the full-service mission and it should not be marked out of YLE's means of expression. The committee proposes that the public service mission include the production, creation and development of stimulating entertainment (translation TP).

This concept of 'stimulating entertainment' made it into the legislative text (YLE Law, 2005) and is the newest version in a series of attributes characterising 'entertainment' in the history of YLE over the decades. Historically, YLE entertainment has been variously characterised as "refining, innocent, suitable, activating, informative" and, even, as "irritating". The meta-attribute is *different*, i.e. distinctive. Public service entertainment should be different when compared with commercial entertainment. This is sometimes couched as an antidote to harmful entertainment effects. Public service entertainment should have higher standards. Defining those standards in practice has been largely left for the company to figure out.

What are the requirements for difference and high standards in public service entertainment? The final report of the EBU's digital strategy group put the greatest emphasis on the ability of public broadcasters to gather large groups of diverse people into one shared "town square or market place of modern society". From this perspective PSB is dedicated to supporting national culture and providing a forum of debate about national issues (EBU, 2002: 38-40). Although there is new emphasis on handling developments at both individual and international levels, and especially in relation to multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity, the emphasis remains squarely on the national cultural level, i.e., avoiding media ghettos and promoting inclusive programming.

This is clearly a good starting point because it implies the importance of social cohesion, but as clearly there is need for broader awareness of what entertainment is in the public service context. At a very practical level the solutions for public service entertainment must be *genre-aware*. European public service organisations have entered a new period, well illustrated by the notion of a "television of plenty" (Ellis, 2000), which suggests that each genre has a social role quite nearly therapeutic in nature. This insight is also applicable to other sorts of electronic media; each medium and genre need be recognised as a navigation point whereby audiences and broadcasters come together, con-

tinuously achieving orientation and renewing relevance. For content strategy the key questions are about which genres to maintain, what genres to develop, and in what sort of genres public service companies ought to excel? In short, what *genre palette* should public service media have?

As important as that is, and it is quite important, we nonetheless need to observe that genre-awareness doesn't necessarily bring more depth to an understanding of entertainment in role or genre. As genre theorist Thomas Schatz pointed out in his influential study of Hollywood film (1981), the use of genre in an industrial sense does not require users to actually understand why or how a particular genre works. Understanding is sufficient so long as practice constructs a commercially attractive audience. The interest is in making money rather than making meaning. And as Schatz also emphasised, in many ways the development of genres under commercial logic is mainly a matter of making small changes to take highly calculated risks in creating some slight twist on known forms of storytelling. Significant change is only really fuelled when a genre form ceases to generate the desired volume of audiences and profits.

For public service companies, however, the situation is not so simple. There are public service values to respect and designated objectives to fulfil, as highlighted in the final report of EBU's digital strategy group (EBU, 2002: 40). Here the development of genres is done with recognition of governing values and PSB mission objectives. Innovation is not profit-driven; innovation is service-based. Mature capabilities in creating, maintaining, developing and excelling in any genre inherently requires understanding how and why it works, in this case meaning how entertainment works as a genre. Hence, for PSM there is both cause and need for much deeper *entertainment-awareness* than is the case for commercial operators.

It is therefore a bit surprising to find that although there is a lot of research about entertainment, very little of that digs deeply into the question of what entertainment is and why whatever we find entertaining actually entertains us. In this context, Richard Dyer's (1992) work stands out as a good first remedial step in addressing the lack. Although his considerations are based on research about film musicals, the developed theory offers clues about what entertainment-awareness could mean in principle for PSM. Dyer (ibid: 18) said:

Two of the taken-for-granted descriptions of entertainment, as 'escape' and as 'wish-fulfilment', point to its central thrust, namely, utopianism. Entertainment offers the image of 'something better' to escape into, or something we want deeply that our day-to-day lives don't provide. Alternatives, hopes, wishes – these are the stuff of utopia, the sense that things could be better, that something other than what is can be imagined and maybe realized.

For Dyer, entertainment is fundamentally a sociological concept (ibid: 24). Its effect can be traced from the utopian solutions of entertainment back to social tensions keyed to inadequacies or absences created by society. Even without

going deeper into Dyer's theory this thinking in relation to public service entertainment is immediately useful. To use Dyer's idea of entertainment as an evolving set of utopian solutions – alternatives, hopes and wishes that respond to social and cultural needs – makes it possible to return to the triad of roles in the traditional public service mission to quickly see how entertainment is related to the other two (to inform and to educate) as an equal, interdependent partner. These three content roles need be understood as *modes* that every genre uses in some proportion. All three roles are crucial in and to every genre and the varying degrees is part of the essence of genre innovation and content development. By way of analogy, a three-legged stool can't stand on two legs. All three modes are constituent in every genre.

In the public service mission the role of educating is most tightly associated with Enlightenment ideal and traditions. From the educational perspective public service should be about providing people with the kinds of normative cultural capital necessary for them to act as enlightened citizens in their own respective and collective interests (Jauert & Lowe, 2005: 14-15). In practice this means public service content should nurture citizens' understanding of how society and culture work and how different forces at interdependent levels (global, national and local) shape the environment in which they live their everyday lives. In short, it is about understanding the building blocks of a shared sociocultural environment, the basis on which the evolving environment is continually under construction.

The role of informing is most tightly associated with providing factual information about the everyday use of these building blocks, e.g., how parliamentary power is being used, how wealth is being created, distributed and redistributed, what new ideas are presented by different actors of the society, etc. It is fulfilling public service media's obligation to provide reliable information about the state of things and to observe the direction of movement in the sociocultural environment. This is the classic surveillance and watchdog function.

The role of entertaining also accomplishes something unique that is interdependent with the other two legs. Drawing on Dyer's ideas in collusion with the notions put forward by the EBU's digital strategy group, at least three functions are clearly validated for the role of public service entertainment. Taken together, recognising these functions opens the process for understanding the entertainment role and mode as a fundamental component of the core in the public service mission *as a whole*.

First, entertainment calls for programming which questions and even ridicules traditional categories of understanding (education) and the reliability of information, i.e. the ground on which the other two roles in the public service mission operate. That certainly validates satire, parody and media criticism. Second, entertainment calls for programming which tests and illustrates hypothetical outcomes in order to experience alternative ways of being (i.e. fiction, science programmes, reality). That is a crucial precondition for growing social tolerance, cohesion and vitality. Third, entertainment calls for programming that lends emotional valence to social themes in a particular and shared social

environment; putting faces and names to facts and figures that would otherwise be hard or impossible to do in the factual domain without threatening the credibility requirements inherent to the genres that live there. The point I really want to make here is that the full scale in PSM is *a fully human* scale. That is obviously central for strengthening cohesion even while nurturing pluralism; i.e. public service entertainment is necessary for successfully managing media's role in balancing a defining paradox of modern society.

What this essentially means is that in addition to the genre-awareness and entertainment-awareness already discussed, we need to include the larger frame of *sociocultural-awareness*. Entertainment operates at the level of genres, but its function must be evaluated in terms of its ability to define, describe, capture and react to sociocultural phenomena. Given the nature of this endeavour and the cultural complexities entailed, it is impossible to offer standardised, explicit recipes for making public service entertainment. But this way of thinking focuses the questions for, and by which, public service entertainment must be evaluated: Does this content cause people to question assumed realities of everyday life? Does it provide people with alternative ways of thinking about being, and possibly also actually becoming? Does it give voice and name to some theme that people have been thinking about but haven't had the imagination or the courage to speak aloud? Does it help people imagine the world we ought to build, the place we would prefer to live in, and the future that could become true? Audiences are here understood as people (in groups and as individuals) wanting to use entertainment content for their own social purposes and life projects.

Such thinking does not replace the instrumental approach outlined earlier, but it certainly supplements it. Whereas the instrumental approach too easily sees one-way processes in which thematic content flows from serious programming to entertainment (instrumentality in programming), or where entertainment is desirable to convene large-scale audiences (instrumentality as legitimisation), this normative way of looking at public service entertainment is itself a service because it cares greatly about the public value in entertainment that is fundamentally the key source of legitimacy for the genre in a PSM context. Often sociocultural phenomena need be first opened via entertainment content in order to fruitfully realise a deepening of understanding through treatments in other genre domains.

The obvious limitation of the ideas proposed in this chapter lies in the absence of treatment about the level of production. Entertainment in television and radio evolves in symbiosis with wider social and cultural phenomena. The successes in entertainment can be partly determined by the right recruitment policies, and by systematically searching out the great in-house talent and giving them resources and opportunities to exercise their skills. Although absent in this chapter due to space limitations, this thinking is a subject for treatment elsewhere.

The point to be taken from this treatment is that evolving a deeper understanding of what entertainment is as genre and mode is required to mature

the full-scale and fully human public service mission, and doing that is a foundational issue that must be treated before the fullest rhetorical and also operational possibilities can be achieved in PSM practice.

References

- Alasuutari, P. (1991) *TV-ohjelmien Arvohierarkia Katsomistottumuksista Kertovien Pubetapojen Valossa*. [Television program value hierarchy in the discourses of spectatorship narratives] In Kytömäki, J. (ed.) *Nykyajan Sadut Joukkoviestinnän Kertomukset Ja Vastanotto* [Contemporary fairytales. Narratives and reception of Mass Communication]. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Born, G. (2004) *Uncertain Vision*. London: Vintage Books.
- Bruun, H. (2005) *Public Service and Entertainment: A Case Study of Danish Television 1951-2003*. In Lowe, G.F. and Jauert, P. (eds.) *Cultural Dilemmas in Public Service Broadcasting*. Göteborg, Sweden: Nordicom.
- Collins, R. (2004) 'Ises' and 'Oughts': *Public Service Broadcasting in Europe*. In Allen, R. and Hill, A. (eds.) *The Television Studies Reader*. London: Routledge.
- Dyer, R. (1992) *Only Entertainment*. London: Routledge.
- Ellis, J. (2000) *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- EBU (2002) *Media with a Purpose: Public Service Broadcasting in the Digital Era*. Geneva: EBU.
- EBU (2005) *EBU Yearbook 2005*. Geneva: EBU.
- BBC (1992). *Extending Choice: The BBC's Role in the New Broadcasting Age*. London: BBC.
- Hujanen, T. (2003) Public Service Strategy in Digital Television: From Schedule to Content. *Journal of Media Practice*, 4(3), pp.133-153.
- Jauert, P. and Lowe, G.F. (2005) Public Service Broadcasting for Social and Cultural Citizenship: Renewing the Enlightenment Mission. In Lowe, G.F. and Jauert, P. (eds) *Cultural Dilemmas in Public Service Broadcasting*. Göteborg, Sweden: Nordicom.
- Kant, I. (1784) What is Enlightenment? Translation available at: <http://www.english.upenn.edu/~mgamer/Etexts/kant.html>. Originally published in *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, Bd. 4, 1784, p. 481-494. Retrieved August 20, 2007, from <http://www.ub.uni-bielefeld.de/cgi-bin/neubutton.cgi?pfad=/diglib/aufkl/berlmon/122842&seite=00000513.TIF&scale=8>.
- Lyytinen, E. (1996) *Perustamisesta Talvisotaan* [From founding to the Winter War]. In *Yleisradion Historia. 1. osa : 1926-1949*. [History of YLE. Part 1: 1926-1949] Helsinki: Yleisradio.
- McDonnell, J. (1991) *Public Service Broadcasting: A Reader*. London: Routledge.
- Mäntymäki, E. (2006) *Hyvinvointivaltio Eetterissä Yleisradion Rakentuminen Populaarien Diskurssien Kentillä* [Welfare state on the air. The formation of YLE in the field of popular discourse]. Tampere, Finland: Tampere University Press.
- Niemelä, S. et al. (2004) *Julkisen Palvelun Televisio- ja Radiotoiminta 2010* [Public service television and radio 2010]. Helsinki: Liikenne ja viestintäministeriö [Ministry of Traffic and Communication].
- Nissen, C.S. (2006) *No public Service without Both Public and Service – Content Provision between the Scylla of Populism and the Charybdis of Elitism*. In Nissen, C.S. (ed.) *Making a Difference: Public Service Broadcasting in the European Media Landscape*. UK: John Libbey Publishing.
- Nissen, C.S. (2005). *The Public Service Nun*. In Lowe, G.F. and Jauert, P. (eds.) *Cultural Dilemmas in Public Service Broadcasting*. Göteborg, Sweden: Nordicom.
- Rorty, R. (2001) *The Continuity between the Enlightenment and 'Postmodernism'*. In Baker, K.M. and Reill, P.H. (eds.) *What's Left of Enlightenment? A Postmodern Question*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Rumphorst, W. (2007) Presentation remarks in a summit of high experts meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania on 19 February. Sponsored by OSI, the Open Society Institute: *Digital Broadcasting in Europe – Regulation, Policy and the Public Interest*.
- Schatz, T. (1981) *Hollywood Genres Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

- UNESCO (2007) Strengthening Public Service Broadcasting for Education, Cultural Awareness and Civil Society. Retrieved August 20, 2007, from http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=1525&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.
- UNESCO (2005) Public Service Broadcasting: A Best Practices Sourcebook. In Banerjee, I. and Se-neviratne, K. (eds.) Retrieved August 19, 2007, from http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=20469&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.
- Wessberg, A. (2005) Frontiers of Development for the EBU. *EBU Yearbook 2005*. Geneva: EBU.
- White, A. (2002) Public Media: Democratic Values. *Diffusion* 2002/3, pp.10-13.
- Yleisradion Suunta* (1967) Helsinki: Weilin + Göös.
- Yleisradion Vuosikirja YLE* (1969) Helsinki: Yleisradio.

PSM PROGRAMMES: STRATEGY & TACTICS

Ideals and Complications in Audience Participation for PSM

Open Up or Hold Back?

Yngvar Kjus

Public service broadcasting [PSB] has many and varied tasks mandated for its performance as components of the remit in each national setting. Such typically include facilitating social cohesion or integration, supporting national and local cultural identities, respecting diversity, and incorporating public opinion. It is important to understand that all of this can only be done via the production, acquisition and distribution of content. As a professional organisation and in social practice, the value and importance of PSB is programmatic. That is where its core values are translated into valued services. In this chapter we assess a format phenomenon that has strong affinity for PSB in terms of its traditional values and foundational ethos. We will find that achieving the mandate is a complex enterprise and that affinity must be combined with innovation to secure success today. That requires taking risks, so the management of risk is an essential contemporary demand for strategic managers. In particular, the case of *Great Britons* well illustrates what can go right and what can go terribly wrong with regard to the challenges audience participation present for editorial responsibilities that are at the heart of public service legitimacy and respect.

As new media platforms permeate increasing layers of social life, public service broadcasters are exploring their potential for service development. PSB increasingly offers services in online and mobile media, and has for some time employed the rhetoric of omnipresence to justify such expansion – i.e. availability on all (relevant) platforms. That indicates a strategic intention to become public service media [PSM] companies. New media platforms represent fresh possibilities for both transmitting content to the public and receiving content and response from it. Both suggest considerable legitimising gains, but the latter also involve considerable potential risks to quality standards and editorial responsibility.

In more traditional forms of audience participation, such as the call-in radio show (Ytreberg 2004), broadcasters have established methods for controlling the contributions of non-professionals to ensure no serious transgressions occur that would damage credibility or raise legal and even ethical problems. But in

attempts to employ new media to produce pervasive audience participation across platforms, content producers face new dilemmas in gate-keeping. What utterances should be invited, to which media, and what should be edited out? What forms of participation are in keeping with the public service remit, and what is not? Here we investigate and interrogate the ideal of 'opening up' and the practice of 'holding back' to argue that the way PSB engages audience participation highlights keen challenges incumbent in the process of transforming to become PSM.

A central challenge in this transformation is how to offer services that are qualitatively different from commercial providers, i.e. distinctive, but at the same time popular (Nissen, 2006). The challenge is in some ways similar to PSB radio and television when these were first hammered by commercial competition in the mid to late 1980s. But it also differs because commercial providers have dominated new media platforms from their start and PSB has often had to play catch up here. Also commercial broadcasters have produced by far the bulk of popular international television formats involving participation across multiple platforms. Such especially include *Big Brother* (since 1999) and *Idol* (since 2001). That head start raises questions about how, and even why, PSB should catch up? Our case study of the *Great Britons* format has almost exclusively been produced in, by and for PSB (which is quite unusual) and suggests responses to these pivotal questions. Created by the BBC in 2002, *Great Britons* offers timely insights to how traditional PSB envisions itself in the emerging multimedia environment and the ways to approach PSM in practice.

The inversion and diffusion of a 'PSB format'

The *Great Britons* format was created and developed by the Factual and Learning division of the BBC and so has roots in the PSB ethos. The BBC is the first and largest PSB company and still very often the vanguard in work to engage new media for public service application. The recently renewed Royal Charter declares that providing the public with the benefits of emerging communication technologies and services is one of six overarching purposes that now define the remit for the institution.¹ This institutional priority is reflected in marked increases in funding for new media.

The Head of News in BBC Interactive, Pete Clifton, experienced a near doubling of the budget in 2006 which partly went towards building a unit entirely devoted to audience contributions.² Interactive producer Michael Lachmann, employed in this unit, picked up "this feeling that the BBC is a public resource and if people have something to say it should act as a medium for them to say it; that the general public should have access to the BBC coming the other way as well." Lachmann was part of the team producing the original *Great Britons* in 2002 and argues that the programme reflected a fundamental shift in thinking towards much greater involvement of the audience and on a far larger scale.

The concept for this format was developed by a group of programme executives in the Factual and Learning Division, according to series producer Mark Harrison. The plan was to produce a series of documentaries about great persons in British history, and was in that sense a remake of an earlier BBC series from 1978 by the same name. At that time Britons such as Thomas Cook and Horatio Nelson were handpicked and evaluated by scholarly researchers and experts. It was a traditional top-down approach to documentary production; a method that has been largely pro-forma inside PSB companies historically.

In 2000, however, BBC programme executives wanted something different and not determined by the traditions in PSB documentaries. They wanted greater audience involvement and public attention. As the concept matured it was distilled to an essence:

The challenge

Q: How do you make a series of biographical documentaries into a nationwide event?

A: Turn it into a campaign and let the audience have their say.³

The idea was to let audience members determine results in the series and thereby turn this into an ongoing event that people would follow from day to day. Experts would not decide outcomes and the production would have to be flexible enough to always reflect the immediate evolving responses of the audience. These twists represented daring experimentation within a genre that had, since the 1920s, been construed primarily as a tool for informing and educating the public.

Deliberately transferring editorial authority from the institution to the audience raised loud, sharp protest from numerous BBC executives and makers, according to Mark Harrison. Although many saw the project as a crude popularisation of PSB and national history, the project group carried the day by emphasising the gains in democratisation and popular involvement that audience participation would mean to and for BBC public service objectives. The audience was first to decide on ten Britons to be presented in biographical TV documentaries, and secondly to later vote among the ten for the greatest in British history. Distinctive to the project was the idea that absolutely everyone must be able to participate at the same time and to fundamentally influence the substance of programme content. Company professionals controlled the format, but it was for the audience to fill it in and then make the judgement. This indicates a significant rebalancing solution of pointed interest for PSB when viewed in an historic light.

Incorporating participation in the programme required a complex integration of data in the form of voting and polls via the web, SMS telephone messages, interactive television [iTV] using the 'red button', as well as traditional return channels that include mailed postcards and telephone calls. The concept would incorporate participation results rather than only verbalised opinions (characteristic in programmes that permit telephone callers to speak on the

air). A second novelty was the scale of audience to be involved. This format would permit far greater audience influence on essential content elements than ever before.

The scope of this new openness caused anxiety even within the project group. There were concerns that some currently popular culture celebrity like Posh Spice or David Beckham could be elected the greatest Briton of all time. Such an outcome would be a rather obvious problem given the import of the educational legacy for the BBC. We shall return to this discussion. One should also here observe that the concerns in part illustrate a general problem for PSB professionals – a danger of underestimating the intelligence and capabilities of the audiences they are mandated to serve. But that criticism must be set in brackets because, as we will also see later, adaptation efforts in other contexts rather confirm the chronic suspicions that many PSB producers entertain about their audiences.

When *Great Britons* was launched in 2002 it was a big success in every respect – in terms of ratings, audience activity and public debate. Prime Minister Winston Churchill was eventually anointed the greatest Briton of all time, and was widely regarded as a worthy winner. But the history of the programme as a format had only begun because success in Britain attracted widespread attention from PSB companies abroad. Given the eager interest in replicating this success, the programme was transformed into a licensed format that was sold and reproduced in many countries. BBC Worldwide, the wholly owned but separate commercial subsidiary, considers this the first full-fledged audience participation format in their repertoire.⁴

Table 1. Diffusion of the BBC *Great Britons* format 2002-2007

Year	Country	Public br.	Commercial br.	Winner	Unlicensed
2002	UK	BBC		Winston Churchill	
2003	Germany	ZDF		Konrad Adenauer	
2004	Holland	KRO		Pim Fortuyn	
	Finland	YLE		Carl Mannerheim	
	Canada	CBC		Tommy Douglas	
	South Africa	SABC		Nelson Mandela	
	Australia	ABC		Howard Florey	X
2005	France	France 2		Charles De Gaulle	
	Belgium (Dutch)	VRT		Pater Damiaan	
	Belguim (French)	RTBF		Jacques Brel	
	Norway	NRK		Kong Olav V	X
	Czech Republic	ČT		Charles IV	
	USA		Discovery, AOL	Ronald Reagan	
	New Zealand		Prime	Ernest Rutherford	X
2006	Romania	TVR		Ștefan cel Mar	
2007	Bulgaria	BNT		Vasil Levski	
	Portugal	RTP		António de Oliveira Salazar	

German ZDF was the first country to reproduce the format, and did so under the guidance of BBC 'travelling producers'. *Unsere Besten* (2003) was followed by others; thus far eleven PSB companies have produced adaptations. As the table indicates, two PSB companies are on shaky ethical ground, having produced versions without buying the licence. There have also been two purely commercial versions of the format produced by theme channels. But the format's affinity to and for PSB is significant, as underscored not only by its origin in the BBC but also by its widespread and fast diffusion among traditional European PSB companies (ZDF, KRO, YLE, etc). The format clearly had 'legs' as it also diffused beyond Europe to PSB companies that rely on hybrid funding models, especially Canada's CBC.

Thus, the format has a conceptual foundation that attracts PSB interest, and the most obvious aspect of this is the direct, explicit linkage to national history and cultural identity. Stories about great compatriots and national heroes have a long history in both didactic and nation building projects, and in most PSB applications of this new format a figure that symbolises some formative moment and transition in a national history has won. The unique aspect in this format is the affordance it allowed in successfully combining PSB tradition with innovation, projecting a perception of the PSB broadcaster in search of new and successful ways to better serve its audience. The traditional PSB broadcaster was inviting its public to perform an evaluation of significance in defining national legacy and identity, and was actively employing multiple platforms to let that public have its say conveniently and personally.

Three observations of generalizable importance are significant here. First, it is possible for particular approaches to content production to effectively, successfully manage the balance between PSB distinctiveness and popularity. Secondly, managing that balance effectively very much depends on promising developments that keep faith with, and rely on, core values that are the heart of PSB legitimacy. Ethos governs distinctiveness. Thirdly, being premised on that alone is insufficient, however, to achieve success today. In this balance innovation is as important as tradition. The innovation achieved here is not only in harnessing new media and technologies to devise a unique format, significant as that is to PSM. It is also more and fundamentally about taking the risks required to grow participation, as we shall discuss in turn, and a second core demand for PSM.

Relationships and their representation

The legitimising rhetoric of this programme format was persuasive and emphasised a key attribute of PSB, namely the linking of dispersed individuals to convene a shared public world. *Great Britons* offered a compelling image of a sustained and reciprocal connection between private and public life – that defining 'communicative relationship' of PSB elaborated by Paddy Scannell (2005). This relationship involves communicative entitlement, meaning that everyone

informed about something is entitled to express an opinion about it. The nature of the relationship was condensed in *Great Britons* by framing the enterprise as a national campaign and inviting the direct input of every citizen.

The quest for a national hero has significant traits characteristic of a 'celebratory ritual' and combines the 'scripts' of contest and coronation (see Dayan & Katz, 1992). Such rituals can decisively confirm social bonds. The celebration of heroes underscores this basic function because a defining feature of hero-ness is its ability to formulate a commonly shared platform of values that unites people despite their differences (Abrahams, 1966). Winston Churchill was certainly such a hero in British history, and the same for Konrad Adenauer, Carl Mannerheim, Tommy Douglas and other winners in respective national contexts. Moreover, it is interesting to observe that these legends are so often relatively contemporary and the hero status was developed in close relation to PSB production in the 20th century. Most of the winners in most national cases are recent figures that were very commonly heard and seen on domestic public service broadcasting channels.

Facilitating integration and social cohesion has a long tradition in the BBC, as for PSB in most countries. In the 1920s and 1930s it was considered the overarching rationale for the public service approach due to a great cultural, social, political and geographical diversity (Cardiff et al., 1987 & 1991). Much importance was associated with service related to national ceremonies and rituals, while current political controversy was largely avoided. Simon Cottle (2006: 414-5) has pointed out that 'mediatized rituals' need to create images of a co-operating society to be effective. He quoted Emile Durkheim (1965 [1915]: 465-6) from his study of public ceremonies and religious life:

Society cannot make its influence felt unless it is in action, and it is not in action unless the individuals who compose it are assembled together and act in common. It is by common action that it takes consciousness of itself and realizes its position; it is before all else an active co-operation. The collective ideas and sentiments are even possible only owing to these exterior movements, which symbolize them.

Cottle defines the mediation of such ritual action as celebratory media events, characterised by being 'consensual' and 'affirming' in his typology (2006: 426). The BBC's transmission of national processions and ceremonies in its early decades was geared for these integrating qualities. The first Director General, John Reith, wanted to bind the regions of the state together in 'making the nation one man' (Reith, 1925). *Great Britons* can be understood as a contemporary explicit trajectory of this project in its ambition to unite the nation around one hero and to project an image of this society in joint action or, more precisely, as a whole nation taking action.

However, the act of representing the nation is difficult, especially when its integration is at stake. Already in the 1920s and 1930s this problem was posed to BBC producers:

How should such entities as empire or nation be represented? If the BBC drew on older cultural traditions and, on history or folk music and poetry, the fare might be too archaic, even meaningless to large sections of the audience. If it attempted to construct its own images, it was in danger of indulging an empty and pretentious rhetoric. If it dealt in the contemporary and actual, it might encounter controversy. Empire and nation were in themselves unstable; there was India, there was Ireland. To expose such rifts would be to defeat the purpose of the programmes (Cardiff et al., 1987: 163).

It became evident for the BBC that what they wanted to project – that unified national population – did not exist and so had to be constructed to achieve their programme service objectives. Producers therefore developed ways of combining ‘the idealised’ with ‘the actual’, for instance by featuring perfected stereotypes of dialects and characters from the various regions. Essentially the BBC had to both compromise and negotiate what the construct should include and also exclude. In the first decades this work was governed by the aim of integration for social cohesion. This pursuit, however, posed problems in achieving a second and also fundamental objective: The democratic ideals grounding the BBC also featured ambitions for securing public debate and stimulating civic participation. From the 1940s controversial issues and a greater variety of viewpoints and voices were increasingly included (ibid). There was a discernable shift in the basic aims of social integration on the one hand and the aims of public debate on the other. *Great Britons* reflects keeping faith with those deeper, wider objectives, and was therefore subject to the complicated task of balancing both aims in service to and for modern, mediated British society. Paradoxically, although opening up for audience participation increases the potential for projecting integrative images of society in action it, at the same time, increases the risk of exposing conflict and fragmentation.

The spread of new media platforms over the last decade has provided individuals with practical, immediate feedback channels. That, in turn, has presented PSB with new challenges in mediating collective activity. Many PSB companies have taken on this challenge by producing their own national version of *Great Britons* as part of their programmatic response. One explanation is that the threat of becoming marginalised has grown as a practical result of growing competition and an expanding range of alternative sources. Deregulation has had sweeping impact on traditional PSB and has been strongly felt for twenty years. The advent of online and mobile media which have been strongly dominated by commercial involvement from the beginning and which further fragment the audience with individualised consumption, represent the most recent chapter in this continuing competitive saga.

PSB’s position as mediator between the private and the public, and its role as national master of ceremonies, has thereby been increasingly challenged and arguably endangered. At the same time, European countries (and beyond) have experienced large-scale immigration with growing multicultural complexity. The need for common ground and integrative interaction has grown rather

than diminished. And yet the means for PSB to adequately provide for this service has diminished due to changes in the media ecology. *Great Britons* offered one practical way to address the challenges, and did so by combining the traditional PSB remit with revitalisation and innovation. But this programme format required a tricky balancing act between boldly embracing the new media world and holding on to historically earned prestige – a point underscored by its engagement with national history and culture.

Seen from the outside, most PSB companies seemed to produce their versions of the format effortlessly and with considerable success, celebrating unifying, uncontroversial heroes. In Germany the legendary statesman Konrad Adenauer (1876-1967) won, renowned for opposing the Nazis and being the first Chancellor of West Germany. But beneath the calm surface achieving this outcome actually meant that ZDF worked extensively behind the scenes. And the next PSB company to produce the format – KRO in the Netherlands – was the first to expose keen hazards. *De Grooste Nederlander* (2004) was won by the openly gay, right-wing politician Pim Fortuyn (1948-2002) who was very controversial for his anti-immigration position and his critique of Islam. Two years before the programme production a left-wing activist assassinated Fortuyn during a national election campaign (and sadly just on the grounds of the Dutch public broadcaster, NOS). When he was announced as the winner of the greatest Dutch hero there were loud protests and also much suspicion about vote fraud. The KRO later announced that in fact all votes had not been counted and that William of Orange – the 16th century founding father of the modern nation – would have won. *De Grooste Nederlander* therefore publicly exposed characteristic problems in the need to preserve editorial control whilst also wanting to broadly invite the participative contributions of an audience. The new tensions in modern gate-keeping were heightened by the format's affinity to raise matters over which PSB has traditionally kept firm editorial control for practical and legal reasons. In the next section we examine how these tensions were managed and negotiated in the context of production.

Participation in practice

In the BBC production of *Great Britons* limitations to audience participation became apparent as the programme made the transition from an Internet activity to a television programme. This project began with a national campaign that invited the general public to visit a BBC website to nominate their favourite candidates for the title of the Greatest Briton. Nominations could also be done via mobile phone (SMS messages), by calling in and by mailing a postcard. But the website offered more in discussion forums and updates. Nominating a favourite candidate was the primary form of participation in this period. According to series producer Mark Harrison, the idea was that those being nominated most frequently would proceed to election. But the producers feared that popular candidates would be unsuitable and were planning a

committee of scholars to select the final, official candidates. In other words, before the project could progress from online media to television programme the producers were set on increasing editorial control by screening the results, and thus exercising the traditional gate-keeping function.

Consideration was also clearly related to television's capacity for linking individuals to a shared experience. TV has so far remained the more prestigious medium, synchronising private and public life more powerfully than online media. However, as the nominations rolled in (more than 30,000 in total) the producers were surprised to find there was no need to gate-keep. The most frequent nominees were all worthy candidates and so they could proceed to the election. But the point is that the BBC was, in fact, set on thoroughly enforcing quality control. There was risk involved, and a scale of risk that could undermine the BBC's societal and cultural legitimacy if participatory outcomes went awry.

The same inclination influenced the next stage of programme production when the top ten nominees were to be voted on. Each was presented in a separate documentary and the information about how to vote revealed several important restrictions. Most importantly, the BBC had developed computer-based tools for limiting the votes from each audience member. It was the first time this had been done in a large-scale voting programme and quite contrary to *Big Brother* and *Idol* where multiple voting is strongly encouraged because each call generates profit. In the UK alone *Big Brother* has received over 80 million votes (Bazalgette, 2005: 273). The producers of *Great Britons* set a small fee for each telephone vote (25 pence) hoping to generate just enough money to finance a memorial to commemorate the winner. They also facilitated voting via channels without revenue streams (via online, iTV, and postcards) and co-operated with the interactive media company, Red Fig, in aggregating the votes from all sources. Everyone was to have easy access to a return channel. To keep the involvement up one could vote once each day via each return channel. So the result was a compromise between democratic standards and stimulating broad participation, and also between securing an end result while keeping daily involvement.

But how could broad and extensive participation be generated in the TV broadcasts? Firstly, such 'voting' is a narrow form of participation. Secondly, the documentaries were made in advance and thus out of sync with the real time of the audience. Production did not, therefore, really offer direct forms of audience influence on substance. The challenges for the producers were to compensate for these limitations to produce the fullest possible experience of participation. The interactive producers, Marc Goodchild and Michael Lachmann, developed several solutions. One was a system where iTV viewers (by pressing the red button) could evaluate dimensions of greatness quality in each candidate: legacy, genius, leadership, bravery and compassion. And, importantly, they embedded the documentaries in live-to-air sequences – one before and one after – reporting on the score of the contestants. The latter sequence showed the development through the broadcast and commented on

the support received from different parts of the country. These means helped to build the impression of immediate and pervasive participation despite the actually marginal audience activities on offer.

The response from the audience was stunning. *Great Britons* received about two million votes. About half came during the final broadcast which was produced live-to-air before a studio audience. It was the ultimate run up to the winner, announced at the end, and due to the crucial and irreversible nature of that moment web voting was not allowed for fear of hacking (because web media are open systems as opposed to closed systems in telephone and iTV). Channelling the votes contributed to the accumulation of more than one million telephone votes throughout the series. As each cost 25 pence, more than £250,000 was generated, suddenly putting the BBC in an awkward position. On the positive side the response strongly supported the image of a society in action and thereby lent popular authority to the event. It also projected a PSB company in closer dialogue with citizens, as well as an opening of new potential in communication channels that are fundamental to PSM. On the negative side, however, the programme generated far more money than anticipated, and certainly much beyond what was needed for the planned memorial, making the BBC appear little different from commercial companies. According to series producer Mark Harrison, these revenues embarrassingly made *Great Britons* a victim of its own success, at odds with institutional principles:

The Royal Charter forbids the BBC to make money on audience participation and new media. The commercial potential makes it very complicated to work with these trends. *Great Britons* took us by surprise, and we had to find a suitable charity for the money we made.

For Harrison, *Great Britons* underscored a central problem in new media for PSB – their inherent commercial potential. That is a PSM problem for PSB companies. Profit generating multi-platform formats, like *Idol*, contribute to the hesitancy of many traditional PSB companies. According to Harrison, good programme formats expanding into new media almost invariably facilitate numerous audience services that users can be charged for. PSB companies are typically restricted from utilising this potential, causing international format companies to be reluctant about partnering with PSB. The commercial potential in new media services therefore hinder PSB from engaging in new media innovation and that obstructs development of good multi-platform formats.

But to many PSB companies, *Great Britons* was seen as a suitable format, having been tested by and now accessible from the number one PSB company in the world. The BBC could offer valuable experience in how to control, portion out, and edit participation using cross-media techniques. This know-how was to assist in the various national productions elsewhere. But as we will see, efforts to replicate formats tend to underscore national idiosyncrasies (Waisbord 2004). The peculiar conditions contextualising each PSB cause distinct problems.

National challenges in opening up

The BBC has so far guided eleven reproductions of the format. We take a closer look at a few to gain insight about the dilemmas. The key player in the reproduction process is BBC Worldwide, an independent subsidiary that invests in BBC programmes in exchange for copyrights.⁵ It trades with BBC programme divisions, markets and sells programme licences internationally, and offers consultancy to local producers. After the success of *Great Britons*, BBC Worldwide was approached by numerous PSB companies that wanted to produce their own versions. The original producers authored a production guide, the 'format bible', and served as format consultants called 'travelling producers' during production. This was very important due to the novelty of the format, according to Format Coordinator Debbie Williams who managed the process:

Great Britons is the first audience participation format we have sold, and many of the broadcasters had not made anything like it before, like for instance *Idol*. It is a very large undertaking to do, and many broadcasters were concerned about how to organise it. We had to give a lot of reassurances of how to steer it in the right direction.

BBC Worldwide entered into dialogue with each broadcaster purchasing the rights, and the format consultants envisaged various outcomes and suggested ways to achieve or avoid them. For instance, the possibility of a Nazi leader being voted the greatest was discussed with ZDF and that put German PSB broadcasters off from having an open election. The format consultants proposed appointing a committee of scholars to select 250 names from those candidates nominated by the audience. These 'safe names' were then promoted for the election. This was one and a traditional method for limiting the risks of opening up to audience participation.

The Dutch and the South African versions produced the following year showed the importance of maintaining editorial control. Neither of those cases considered it necessary to produce a safe list and both were subjected to what the format consultants call 'hi-jacking'. Organised action groups took advantage of the opportunity to campaign for their political agendas, utilising the return channels to maximum effect. In Holland Pim Fortuyn was promoted as *De Grooste Nederlander*, turning the programme into a symbolic battlefield of left versus right in domestic politics.

For its part, *Great South Africans* turned into a racial battleground as both pro- and anti-apartheid leaders rose to the top of nominated candidates for election. The programme stirred national controversy as Hendrik Verwoerd, the "Architect of apartheid", ranked higher than Chris Hani, an anti-apartheid activist who died for the abolition cause. Before its conclusion the programme was cancelled due to public outrage and severe criticism. The SABC simply announced that Nelson Mandela was the winner, leaving the other top positions unresolved. The realisation via production of the format in these cases turned

into what Simon Cottle calls “Conflicted media events” because it was allowed to tap into deep-seated and underlying social conflicts:

Contrary to Dayan and Katz’s formulation, then, this class of conflicted ‘media events’ appears to be singled out precisely because such events involve deep conflictive undercurrents, whether those of ‘race’, class or gender. Here a more Gramscian theorization informs the analysis, which recognizes the contending discursive forces and different interests that struggle for cultural hegemony in and through the media event and its public representations (Cottle, 2006: 419).

By opening up to broad audience participation, the format could precisely become a channel for contention among discursive forces, and thereby manifest the exact opposite of a celebratory ritual. The society projected through the programme could then be characterised by conflict instead of co-operation, exposing what divides people rather than what unites them.

Such hazards in new media gate-keeping were explicit and realised in both Holland and South Africa. In Holland there was widespread suspicion of unreliable return channel systems, voting fraud and prejudiced exclusion. In South Africa the underlying social problems were aggravated by technical limitations because the feedback media employed for the programme were very unevenly distributed in the population. Format consultant Michael Lachmann had in fact warned SABC that large sections of the black population lacked personal access to either the Internet or the telephone, or actually both. That reality was ignored and the results strongly undermined *Great South Africans* as any national project in the public service of cohesion. All citizens could not participate or be represented. The domestic producers were harshly criticised for favouring the white population and the rhetoric of reaching out on all platforms was thoroughly unconvincing in the context of post-apartheid South Africa.

The *Great X* series therefore has had to deal with matters of national interest in varying contexts, and has been torn between a celebratory and a conflicted mediatized ritual, and also between the ideals of integration and public debate as gate-keeping the media of participation was co-opted by interest group manoeuvring. To open up to public participation can stimulate civil action and public discussion, and thereby mark the public service institution as a progressive force in society. To hold back obviously risks these better possibilities, but nonetheless safeguards traditional remits and credibility or status.

The risk of playing it too safe is illustrated by the Norwegian unlicensed version produced in 2005. The NRK produced their version without BBC assistance and acted in more restrictive fashion than other versions, even including ZDF’s. NRK made a safe list of only 50 names and the production roused comparatively little participation or public attention. The producers also played it safe in terms of commercial potential. In comparison with the BBC, the NRK routinely earns revenue from new media and audience participation (Syvertsen, 2006). But for this production NRK explicitly counteracted this to avoid any

possibility of a commercial image (Kjus, 2007). Essentially, then, the *Great X* format has very often forced public service broadcasters to reconsider some of the most basic questions about how to be and do public service. Theory meets practice, and strategy meets tactics, at the level of programme production. The *Great X* case illustrates how complicated this really is, and must necessarily be understood to be. These insights are fundamental to the PSM transformation in practical terms.

Implications and consequences

Great Britons was a pioneering attempt at applying new media technologies to PSB purposes, and was in that sense about developing PSM. For the most part and nearly everywhere it has been successful. However the versioned productions of the format have exposed a tendency to restrain the bigger opportunities of participation via new technology out of concern for PSB institutional legitimacy. These restraints are generally correlated with concerns over PSB quality standards and perceptions of commercialism. To retain editorial control and secure autonomy from commercialism was particularly important in a format like *Great Britons* because it was explicitly aiming for an idealised image of the relationship that PSB builds between citizens and their society. Rigorous ideals may thus hinder initiatives in pursuit of becoming successful PSM operators. But the exceptional diffusion of the *Great Britons* format among PSB companies indicates strong ambitions for PSB development and advancement into PSM. It also probably indicates a scarcity of formats and examples considered suitable to put ambitions into practice in ways and to degrees that keep faith with the traditional ethos.

The capacity to use new media is keenly cultivated in international formats, accumulating creativity and know-how from production to production (Mathijs & Jones, 2004). The commercial profile of multi-platform formats threatens PSB access to such competence and shows the need for developing and exchanging formats with sister PSM companies as a community. *Great Britons* served this need. The experience and results were also later put to use by the BBC in developing two additional programme ‘format spin-offs’ with the same election system set-up. *The Big Read* (2003) was about choosing the nation’s best-loved novel and *Restoration* (2004) was about selecting a national building most worthy of restoration. These programmes also received many votes, but according to Mark Harrison they triggered intensified discussion about whether this type of programme has anything actually to do with PSB.

Many apparently saw the spin-offs as media-driven popularisation, a viewpoint reflected in the objection of this Head Teacher: “Top 10s, rich lists, poor lists... even a list of the so-called 10 *Greatest Britons*, none of whom can meaningfully be compared to any of the others.”⁶ Other countries’ versions received similar criticism, and the BBC response is indicative of the responses of other PSB operators. Scepticism mounted internally in the BBC until, according to Mark Har-

ri-son, the type of educational voting programme represented by *Great Britons*, *The Big Read* and *Restoration* is now out of fashion. The Factual and Learning Division has moved on to develop more comprehensive forms of participation in environmental programmes including *Springwatch* (2005), *Autumnwatch* (2006) and *Nature of Britain* (2007). This series of programmes employs web media to facilitate a much broader range of audience activities, including a national mapping of British wildlife conducted by local enthusiasts.⁷

BBC programmes with strong affinity to the traditions of enlightenment and stimulating civic life thus seem to cultivate deeper forms of participation with more tangible effects for individual citizens. There is also a tendency to refine work divisions, using online media for extensive, modestly edited participation, and to handpick contributions suited for the strict editorial needs of television. The field of new media is developing fast, and it is interesting to note that just as voting concepts turned unfashionable in Factual and Learning programmes they were nonetheless being warmly embraced within light entertainment. So cross-genre effects also deserve future attention. The BBC devoted the talent contests *Strictly Come Dancing* (2004) and *Strictly Dance Fever* (2005) entirely to popular amusement and having the audience vote for favourites was uncontroversial because it rather underscores the inclusive aim of PSB for this genre of programming.

Development in the BBC indicates that this form of one-dimensional participation is being allocated to programmes with purposes of integration, whereas more comprehensive forms of participation are favoured in programmes promoting civic participation and public debate. The complexity of application and suitability of participation continue to develop as an outcome of programmatic practices more than any theoretical musings about PSM in principle. To study such programmes is really to study the evolution of PSM, and to observe how different forms of mediation and different techniques of gate-keeping first impact and then help to comprise different media and genres. Thus the future of platforms very much depends on the dynamics of programmes. That is what PSM is practically all about.

Notes

1. Source: www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/regulatory_framework/charter_agreement/royalchartersealed_sept06.txt. Visited 10 March 2007.
2. Pete Clifton was interviewed for the purposes of this study 27 June 2006. Semi-structured research interviews are the most important source, and the main informants are key production personnel of *Great Britons*. They were all interviewed at the BBC in White City in spring 2006: 1) series producer Mark Harrison, now head of the Arts division (interviewed 29 June 2006), 2) interactive producer Marc Goodchild, now project manager in the cross-platform developments team in the Factual and Learning division (interviewed 29 June 2006), 3) second interactive producer Michael Lachmann in BBC Interactive (interviewed 6 June 2006), 4) format coordinator Debbie Williams in BBC Worldwide (interviewed 15 February 2006). Other empirical sources are production documents and the programmes themselves, involving television and web output. The study is part of the research programme TIDE at Lillehammer University College, which is funded by the Norwegian Research Council.

3. The paragraph is from interactive producer Marc Goodchild's project description of *Great Britons*.
4. Source: Format coordinator in BBC Worldwide, Debbie Williams.
5. The program budgets of BBC format production represents an increasing income source, and the turnover of format sales in BBC Worldwide rose from £13,2 million in 2005 to £36 million in 2006. BBC Worldwide, content and production: www.bbcworldwide.com/annual-reviews/review2006/contentprod.htm. Visited 1 October 2006.
6. Debate under the title 'Do Teenagers Miss Out on Decent TV?', available at: news.bbc.co.uk/1/low/talking_point/2668571.stm. Visited 1 October 2006.
7. The goal was to 'mobilize a million people to significantly increase the UK's wildlife-friendly green spaces and heighten awareness and understanding of nature'. BBC Interim Environmental Report 2004/2005. Available at: www.bbc.co.uk/info/environment/2005/pdf/2005environmentreport.html. Visited 1 October 2006.

References

- Abrahams, R.D. (1966) 'Some Varieties of Heroes in America', *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 3, pp.341-362.
- Bazalgette, P. (2005) *Billion Dollar Game. How Three Men Risked it All and Changed the Face of Television*, London: Time Warner.
- Cardiff, D. and Scannell, P. (1987) 'Broadcasting and National Unity'. In Curran, J. and Smith, A. (eds.) *Impacts and Influences: Essays on Media Power in the Twentieth Century*. London: Methuen.
- Cardiff, D and Scannell, P. (1991) *A Social History of British Broadcasting: Serving the Nation, 1923-1939*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Cottle, S. (2006) 'Mediatized Rituals: Beyond Manufacturing Consent'. *Media, Culture & Society* 28(3), pp.411-432.
- Daniel, D. and Katz, K.E. (1992) *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kjus, Y. (2007) 'Nye medier – gammel kringkasting'. In Petersen, A.B. and Rasmussen, S.K. (eds.) *Paa tværs af medierne*. Aarhus: Ajour.
- Mathijs, E. and Jones, J. (2004) *Big Brother International: Formats, Critics and Publics*. New York: Wallflower Press.
- Nissen, C.S. (2006) *Making a Difference: Public Service Broadcasting in the European Media Landscape*. Eastleigh, UK: John Libbey Publishing.
- Reith, J.C.W. (1925) *Memorandum of Information*. Presented to the Crawford Committee.
- Scannell, P. (2005) 'The Meaning of Broadcasting in the Digital Era'. In Lowe, G.F. and Jauert, P. (eds.) *Cultural Dilemmas in Public Service Broadcasting*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- Syvetsen, T. (2006) 'Television and Multi-platform Media Hybrids: Corporate Strategies and Regulatory Dilemmas'. In Marcinkowski, F., Meier, W.A., and Trappel, J. (eds.) *Media and Democracy. Experience from Europe*. Bern: Haupt Verlag.
- Waisbord, S. (2004) 'McTV: Understanding the Global Popularity of Television Formats'. *Television and New Media* 5(4), pp.359-383.
- Ytreberg, E. (2004) 'Formatting Participation within Broadcast Media Production'. *Media, Culture & Society* 26(5), pp.677-692.

Great X Websites

The websites of all licensed versions are still available, except South Africa's.
www.bbc.co.uk/history/programmes/greatbritons.shtml
www.zdf.de/ZDFde/inhalt/31/0,1872,2051839,00.html

www.yle.fi/suuretsuomalaiset/
www.cbc.ca/greatest/greatcanadians/
www.degrootstenederland.nl/
<http://programmes.france2.fr/leplusgrandfrancais/8709130-fr.php>
www.czech-tv.cz/specialy/nejvetsicech/hry
<http://dsc.discovery.com/convergence/greatestamerican/greatestamerican.html>
www.degrootstebelg.be/dgb_master/home/dgb_home/index.shtml
<http://lesplusgrandsbelges.rtb.be/>
www.velikite.bg/index.php
www.mariromani.ro/primapagina.php
www.rtp.pt/wportal/sites/tv/grandesportugueses/

Current Affairs in British Public Service Broadcasting

Challenges and Opportunities

Brian McNair

Current affairs programming is a bellwether category within the United Kingdom's public service broadcasting [PSB] system, as in other countries with a strong tradition of public service media [PSM]. The general fitness of PSB is often inferred by scholars, journalists, politicians and regulators alike on the basis of judgments about the health of current affairs programming in particular. When the latter has been found wanting, PSB is often said to be in crisis, or at least in decline. Debates about the direction of trends in public service broadcasting are often debates about the quantity and quality of current affairs, its form and content. Recent debates in the UK have included the suggestion that there is not enough current affairs in the peak time TV schedules; that the agenda of current affairs has 'dumbed down' by becoming too consumer and lifestyle-focused, at the expense of the normatively preferred analysis of economic policy, foreign affairs, or politics; and that the resources required for the kind of investigative work which the best current affairs journalism often demands are being squeezed by competing economic pressures.

In assessing the state of current affairs broadcasting in the UK on the eve of digital switch-over, this essay addresses those arguments. Against the background of far-reaching technological change, it explores the challenges and opportunities faced by public service broadcasters as they grapple with new business models and changing audience expectations as to what current affairs should be about. The contemporary public sphere, as we shall see, is increasingly acknowledged by public service broadcasters to be a very different kind of communicative space from that in which normative definitions of what constitutes 'quality' in current affairs were formed. The Habermasian ideal-type public sphere has evolved as 'private' affairs have increasingly become the subject matter of public discourse and the line between 'information' and 'entertainment' has been blurred. Today, to an unprecedented extent, the personal is indeed political and public service media are making space for factual programming which, while still seen to be addressing topics recognised as being 'current affairs', is increasingly expected to address human interests

– by which I mean the concerns, priorities and interests of people as they go about their daily lives – and to do so in accessible, popular styles.

They must do so in an environment which, because of digitalization and market fragmentation as well as the rise of reality TV and other popular factual genres, places greater value than ever before on public access to, participation in, and interaction with media, and on the importance of entertaining citizens as well as informing them (Enli, 2007; Hill, 2005; van Zoonen, 2004). Some scholars have referred favourably to the ‘feminisation’ of the public sphere in recognition of the heightened prominence of personal / private issues such as domestic violence, sexual morality, consumerism and lifestyle. Others have lamented what they interpret as an economically driven process of ‘tabloidisation’, in which the current affairs agenda is dumbed down to suit the needs of the ‘lowest common denominator’. I will characterise this trend as part of a more general process of cultural democratisation in which individual, private concerns are increasingly seen to have public, political resonance, and in which popular modes of journalistic address are increasingly valued. The shift is in step with and part of the transition to PSM.

The trend predates the current phase of digital convergence within which public service broadcasters must now work, although it is likely to be reinforced by it. Increasingly, public service broadcasting is a misnomer which fails to describe adequately the range of platforms and modes of delivery now possible for public service programming, and which will become steadily more dominant in the coming period. While TV and radio will remain the main platforms for the delivery of public service programming for some time to come, they are now supplemented by online and mobile platforms. These will transform (are already transforming) both the production and consumption of all audio-visual culture, including the products of what used to be public service broadcasting. Incorporating the decentralising, interactive properties of the Internet and mobile phone telephony to establish a public service media system comparable to that which existed on TV and radio in the twentieth century is a key policy challenge for organisations such as the BBC and its equivalents in Europe, and beyond. Indeed, their survival as popular media of education, enlightenment and entertainment depends on it.

The role of current affairs in public service media

In the United Kingdom the obligation to broadcast current affairs programming both in and out of peak-time is imposed (to different degrees) on all free-to-air terrestrial TV channels as a condition of their licences to operate (including BBC1, BBC2, ITV1, Channel 4, Channel 5). Several of the BBC’s radio and digital TV channels also transmit current affairs, especially BBC News 24, BBC4, Radio 4 and Radio Five Live. Alongside news, children’s programming, arts and other categories, current affairs has been identified by successive UK governments and regulators as a protected programme category, and by analysts and com-

mentators as an essential constituent of public service broadcasting. The BBC has been and remains the cornerstone of the UK PSB system, and thus the main provider of current affairs programming here. But the commercial channels also broadcast current affairs in return for the hitherto lucrative privileges of access to scarce analogue spectrum. Commercial broadcasters have, as a condition of making money from advertising on the big free-to-air channels, been required to accept a duty to produce public service programmes which may not be the most popular if compared with other genres such as soap operas and game shows (though current affairs can be popular – see below).

Britain, however, is approaching analogue switch-off and full digitalization, after which the business models driving UK PSB since the 1950s will cease to function. Spectrum scarcity will disappear and a large portion of free-to-air advertising revenues with it, transforming the financial basis on which ITV1, Channel 4 and Channel 5 have operated. Without compensatory funding measures (and as of this writing, the debate continued in the UK as to how commercial PSB could best be financed post-analogue switch-off), it will no longer be possible for government or regulator to demand public service programming from these channels on the same scale and terms as before.

For the BBC, though free from the commercial imperatives of its advertising-based rivals, digitalization brings the no less urgent challenge of how to maintain public, and thus political, support for its licence fee funding. This in turn focuses attention on how it preserves and protects its audience share in a multi-channel environment, what kinds of programmes it makes, and how it makes them. A new Royal Charter (the agreement governing the operation of the BBC) came into operation on January 1 2007, and will last until the end of 2016.¹ Whether it can be extended beyond that, and with it the UK's public service system as it has been traditionally structured, will depend not least on how the corporation interprets and fulfils its obligations in the current affairs field.

Definitions and categories

Current affairs is usually discussed alongside news and company production structures reflect this, as in the BBC's News & Current Affairs Directorate. Both are considered categories of journalism. But where news comprises more or less immediate reportage of events deemed newsworthy on a given day, current affairs explores and analyses the context for, and the longer term meanings and implications of, those events. The UK regulator, Ofcom, defines current affairs programming in this way:

A programme which contains explanation and analysis of current events and ideas, including material dealing with matters of political or industrial controversy or public policy. Also included are investigative programmes with contemporary significance.²

The subject matter of current affairs traditionally includes domestic politics and international affairs, criminal justice, economic policy and all other aspects of life which come within the actual or potential purview of policy makers. Thus, Madonna's controversial adoption of a Malawian baby in 2006 could be a celebrity news story on the one hand and, on the other, the trigger for a current affairs programme on British adoption policy. Current affairs aims to explore often complex issues in greater depth than a news bulletin can aspire to. In broad strokes, current affairs output takes three basic forms which may coexist within a single programme:

- *Narrative* – programmes in which the producers tell a story using techniques such as dramatic reconstruction and interviews, such as a documentary series about Palestinian suicide bombers broadcast on Channel 4 in 2005. The series set out to uncover, through face-to-face interviews with imprisoned Jihadis and their families, the motivations of the bombers, and to consider from their perspective (without necessarily endorsing their beliefs) the issues behind news footage. If the suicide bombing in Baghdad is news, this programme sets out to uncover the context in which radical Islamists have come to believe that such tactics are legitimate political tools.
- *Investigative* – many current affairs programmes present new elements of a story which has been in the news in the past, or develop with new information an issue of long-standing salience. By way of example, in 2004 the BBC's *Secret Policeman* featured an undercover reporter armed with hidden cameras and recorders exposing racism at a British police training college. 'Institutional racism' in the UK police force had been a major news story following the Stephen Lawrence murder and other high profile cases (Cottle, 2004). This programme used classic investigative techniques to shed new light on the scale and root causes of the phenomenon. After the broadcast, public debate and official measures to combat racism within the police followed.
- *Dialogic* – this category of current affairs is talk-based, utilising studio-bound debates and discussions, often with an element of audience participation or mediated access (such as the flagship BBC programme *Question Time* in which five expert guests debate questions posed by a studio audience, who are then invited to contribute to the debate).³ In October 2006, Channel 4's *Dispatches* strand staged an hour-long debate on the issue of 'Do Muslims Threaten Free Speech?' This was in the context of the then-newsworthy issue of the appropriateness of the full face veil (niqab) worn by some Muslim women in the UK. In this category of current affairs output, debate rather than investigation or narrative storytelling is the vehicle for exploring the issues behind the news. This is the only category in which the public participates directly in the process.

News and current affairs can be viewed as formally distinct categories of broadcast journalism, but may coexist within a single programme strand. BBC2's *Newsnight* magazine, for example, generally follows the daily news agenda, but will develop stories through background reports, debate and interview segments. It will also present special investigative or narrative reports on issues which may not have featured in that day's news bulletins, as on the occasion when a reporter travelled behind the lines with the Taliban in Afghanistan. It has organised a number of live studio debates in which members of the public have been able to confront the prime minister on issues such as UK policy in Iraq, and the future of the health service. *Newsnight*, like Channel 4's *7 O'Clock* news, presents a mixture of reportage, analysis, commentary and debate to go beyond the immediate facts of a story.

If these descriptive categories are uncontroversial, more contentious has been the evolution of the current affairs agenda, trends in the quantities of current affairs produced, and its location within the schedules of public service broadcasters.

Current affairs broadcasting – trends and tendencies

Recent research shows that there is now more current affairs on British PSB than at any time in the past. The regulator Ofcom⁴ found that in the five years from 1998 to 2002 the number of hours devoted to current affairs on the five terrestrial TV channels increased by 6.5 per cent, although peak-time hours (between 7-11 in the evening) had declined by 23 per cent. Subsequent Ofcom research suggested that the peak time decline had been arrested⁵ and that between July and December 2005 an average of sixteen hours per week of current affairs were broadcast on the five main PSB channels, of which around 41 per cent was broadcast in peak time.

Of this output, one-third was devoted to what Ofcom calls 'social affairs' (including everything from the July 7 London bombings to bird flu and the rise in UK demand for surgery conducted overseas). Just under a third was devoted to domestic and international politics, and the rest to economics, business, and 'others'. Ofcom noted that over this period all broadcasters with a public service remit reached or exceeded their quotas for current affairs programming.

On international current affairs – where public service broadcasting is required to provide audiences with their 'window on the world' – a similar picture emerges. Seymour and Barnett's 2006 report on factual TV about the developing world concluded that "there has been a resurgence in factual international programming on UK television, following fourteen years of steady decline". The 2005 total of 1170 hours across all free-to-air public service channels is the highest recorded" (2006: 34).⁶

Counting the current affairs output of free-to-air real time news channels such as BBC News 24 and Sky News, the total number of hours available to the viewer increased further (although Sky is not a public service broadcaster).

Two free-to-air digital channels specialise in documentaries and current affairs – BBC Four and More4 (an offshoot of Channel 4).

Taken together, these figures show an upward trend in the provision of current affairs. While there was undoubtedly pressure on the peak time schedules, especially for the commercial channels looking ahead to digital switch-over, provision as a whole has in recent years been more extensive than at any time in British televisual history.⁷ One explanation for this is the impact on broadcast journalism of September 11 and its aftermath, when the particular ‘current affair’ of Islamist terrorism and the military responses to it by the USA and its coalition partners moved to the top of the public agenda. Faced with the threat of mass casualty terrorism, and the issues raised by the subsequent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the demand for current affairs coverage of foreign policy, multiculturalism and related topics expanded, leading to programmes such as the Channel 4 debate on ‘Are Muslims a threat to free speech?’ cited above.

The political imperative and the case of *Panorama*

Another reason for the increase in output has been political pressure for public service broadcasters, and the BBC in particular, to reverse what was perceived as a neglect of current affairs. In 2005, for example, the BBC found its current affairs provision under attack on three fronts. First, there wasn’t enough of it; second, it wasn’t sufficiently prominent in the schedule; and third, its content was inadequate to the goal of engaging the public in civic debate. An independent report published in February that year found that with the flagship *Panorama* programme now transmitting on a Sunday night at 22:15 (for many years it had been transmitted on BBC1 at 20:15 on a Monday), ITV1 was broadcasting twice as much current affairs at peak time as BBC1 (popular factual output such as reality TV was not included in this figure). Mainly this has been done through the channel’s twice-weekly, more human interest-oriented *Tonight* with Trevor MacDonald.

BBC1 thus found itself on the defensive as the Charter renewal process gathered momentum, not least from its own staff.⁸ In March 2006 the editor of *Panorama* announced his resignation in protest at management drift and financial uncertainty around the BBC’s current affairs provision. That resignation followed the announcement of forty job losses in the corporation’s current affairs department affecting all levels from executive to researcher, and the “widespread feeling among programme-makers”, as reported by the *Guardian*, “that BBC1 bosses are failing to make clear their vision for current affairs”.⁹ Around the same time the head of documentaries at the BBC also resigned while *Panorama* was coming under attack for poor ratings. A much-trailed investigative special on the police shooting of Brazilian Juan Charles de Menendez¹⁰ attracted only 2.1 million viewers, a figure which critics contrasted with the 3–4 million averages of the past.¹¹ There was reported to be a view within the management

of BBC1 “that *Panorama* has pursued, at times, too narrow and specialist an agenda and has not been responsive enough to breaking stories”.¹²

In July 2006 the BBC’s managers bowed to the pressure to reassert their commitment to current affairs and announced that from January 2007, *Panorama* would be restored to the peak time slot of 20:30 on a Monday evening. It would produce 48 half-hour editions per year, and four one-hour specials. This decision, it was hoped, would satisfy the political pressure for the BBC to lead in UK current affairs production and help secure a favourable licence fee settlement in 2007.¹³ Moreover, the agenda of the programme would become more accessible. Early editions of the re-launched *Panorama* included investigations of the ethics of assisted contraception clinics in London, the scientology movement, and ‘Football’s Dirty Secrets’ (on corruption in English football). This more human interest-led agenda went head to head with ITV’s *Tonight*, which routinely featured celebrity and consumer stories as well as true crime tragedies such as the disappearance of a British child, Madeleine McCann, on holiday in the Algarve in April 2007. The new approach saw *Panorama* increase its audience to more than 5 million viewers for some programmes (the football special, for example), and regularly exceed *Tonight*’s audience.

The qualitative dimension

Notwithstanding these quantitative trends, for many observers, current affairs as defined above remains “an endangered species”.¹⁴ By this it is meant that the quality, if not the quantity, of current affairs programming available to the British viewer is in decline. Serious or ‘difficult’ current affairs are being squeezed out of the TV schedule, it is argued, especially at peak time, by a focus on celebrity, lifestyle and human interest themes.

There is truth in this claim that TV managers and commissioning editors now work in an environment where the normatively preferred agenda of the traditional public sphere – domestic politics, economics, foreign affairs – has broadened to incorporate topics which were once very much the realm of the private sphere, and where they are under pressure to address those topics in new ways. There has been a shift in the style of much current affairs towards an approach which stresses individual human drama, whether tragic or triumphant, often accompanied by emotion-inducing music and visuals, aggressive ‘door-stopping’ journalism and other techniques for narrativising stories often associated with what has been called ‘infotainment’. The era of solid, investigative current affairs journalism of the type to be found in the hey days of *World In Action* and *Panorama* have given way, it is argued, to an excess of melodrama and pathos.

If it is true that the style of UK current affairs television has changed in recent years, programme-makers insist this is a legitimate and necessary response on their part to the changing demands of the TV audience, and the changing economics of production. On this latter point: while the UK’s commercial chan-

nels have an honourable record in the production of pioneering current affairs, including the iconic *World In Action* on ITV that to this day is regarded as emblematic of the best of the genre, all agree that the post-analogue environment is much more hostile for this type of 'serious' programming. Put simply, the multi-channel, multi-platform digital environment will drain funding from the existing PSB system and place greater pressures on commercial air time. In a sense, then, PSM signals difficulty for PSB.

Current affairs programming is valued by audiences, as Ofcom research found in 2005¹⁵, but in a likely future environment where there is no (or little) subsidy for commercial public service programming it must be popular enough to justify its place in advertiser-funded schedules where the competition is soap opera, reality TV and game shows. Where *Tonight's* 20:00 audience averages around 4 million, even with its relatively populist agenda, the *Coronation Street* soap opera is watched by 9 million people. In the analogue world, the successful soap subsidised the less ratings-friendly current affairs. In the era of full digitalization all programmes are under greater pressure to pay their way in ratings terms.

Reality TV and the rise of factual programming: Changing fashions in current affairs

At the same time as the economic environment for current affairs is changing, so too are audience expectations for both content and form. The rise of factual, reality-based programming is the most significant trend in British television in recent years (true also of many other countries). Docu-soaps, competitive reality TV formats such as *Big Brother*, make-over shows, property and relocation shows, and their celebrity-based spin-offs, have in their totality come to occupy a greater part of UK television output than any other category.¹⁶ These popular factual programmes tend to be classified as entertainment rather than current affairs, although of course they may address issues of great importance to those who participate in them, and to the millions in the audience who watch them.

The success of these programmes has shown, on the one hand, that the television audience has a huge appetite for the real as opposed to the made-up, for the factual as opposed to the fictional. While many critics have attacked the alleged banality of reality TV and associated its rise with the broader process of journalistic 'dumbing down', others suggest it represents a significant democratisation of TV culture, in so far as these formats, like no other, make space for the discussion of issues and problems which interest ordinary people (Hill, 2005; McNair, 2002; Dovey, 2000). The discovery that reality is popular is encouraging for supporters of high quality news and current affairs. In the same way that the recent success of low budget documentary films in the world's multiplexes is a refreshing antidote to the dominance of the \$200 million Hollywood blockbuster, there is something profoundly democratising about the extent to which everyday lives and concerns now occupy peak-time slots

across TV schedules. The agenda of current affairs broadcasting is no longer monopolised by professional political and media elites.

The cultural worth of reality TV is less important for the purposes of the current debate than its all-conquering ratings success, and its demonstration that fact-based TV can be popular. One consequence of the trend has been the increasing incorporation by current affairs producers of agendas, styles and techniques which might capitalise on the evident popularity of the former. As a 2003 Ofcom-commissioned report on current affairs put it, “the docu-soap and the subsequent arrival of ‘reality’ television [have] led viewers to expect people-centred television that captures events as they occurred. Current affairs, which relies on analysis of the current position through interviews and re-telling of individual events and stories, [feels] old fashioned”.

We can rephrase this to say that ‘current affairs’¹⁷ as such has not become old-fashioned, but rather that a particular way of doing it has. If, as has been widely accepted, there has been a decline in the popularity of ‘specialist’ current affairs of the *Panorama/World In Action* type (although it is not as great as some pessimists have suggested, and hardly more than could have been anticipated given the proliferation of channels and platforms from which audiences derive their information), lessons are being learnt from reality TV about how to refresh and revitalise the genre, and thus maintain its place at peak time.

In 2005, and in response to concerns about the declining participation of the British public in politics, ITV1 launched a show combining familiar current affairs subject matter – domestic politics – with a reality TV format. *Vote for Me* sought to engage its audience in the process of debating political issues and selecting candidates for elections. Looking ahead to the general election of May 2005 the producers (the same team as made the *Monarchy* debate for ITV in 1997 – which attracted 8 million viewers to a public participation special on the future of the British monarchy – and regular editions of *Ask The Prime Minister* since the election of Tony Blair as prime minister) used the audience phone-in and studio participation techniques pioneered by reality strands such as *Pop Idol* to select from a group of aspiring citizen-politicians someone who would go on to stand as an independent candidate in a real constituency. The aim of this fusion of reality TV and current affairs was to “counter the alienation that young people feel towards every aspect of politics”.¹⁸ The experiment was not successful, in so far as it failed to gain a substantial audience or to produce the level of media and public engagement intended by the producers. Scheduled out of peak time at 11.00 pm, *Vote for Me* was probably doomed from the start, a timid gesture by ITV’s commissioning editors towards their critics. It was, nonetheless, representative of the efforts of TV producers to grapple with the perception that traditional current affairs broadcasting, not least in the sphere of politics, was losing its relevance to the mainstream audience – the more youthful segment of that audience in particular – and that new styles and techniques were required.

If that particular experiment will go down in televisual history as an honourable failure, the value of increasing public access and audience participation

has continued to drive the evolution of current affairs programming. The BBC has a long tradition of 'mediated access' (McNair et al., 2003) on both radio and TV, and there were successful access strands on commercial TV before the rise of reality TV. Since 2000, however, and often in the context of covering the complex debates about Iraq, the war on terror and multiculturalism which have dominated the UK public sphere since 2001, access and public participation have become more important elements in programme design, facilitated by the increasing public familiarity with and use of interactive technologies. A flagship debate show such as the BBC's *Question Time*, for example, now encourages audience participation not just in the studio but through text messaging and email. Audience input is made available through the BBC's website. Members of the audience for this and many other current affairs programmes are invited to cast an electronic vote on the issues under discussion, or to post a comment, or participate in online debate with others in the audience.

The expanding opportunities for public participation in current affairs programmes of all kinds has yet to produce noticeable increases in ratings, but producers hope that they may halt or slow down the decline which might otherwise have occurred in the face of digitalization and multi-channel TV.

Dumbing down or the end of didacticism?

While the encouragement of technology-driven public participation in current affairs programming has been accepted as a sensible innovation, more controversial has been the perceived 'dumbing down' or tabloidisation of the current affairs agenda in response to increased competition for air time, allied with the evident popularity of fact-based entertainment programming. *Panorama* again provides a good example of the trend in question.

From the normative perspective of what defines 'serious' current affairs, a model edition of *Panorama* would be an investigation of the current state of the UK economy, constructed in accordance with the Birtian (after John Birt) 'mission to explain' and containing such elements as journalists and contributors who are expert in the field, interviews with authoritative men in suits, detailed graphs and figures, and so on. And indeed, there are still editions of *Panorama* which take this approach in their investigations of National Health Service funding, the likely policy agenda of new Prime Minister Gordon Brown, or the recent loans-for-Lordships scandal affecting the Labour government. This is entirely proper, since the democratization or privatisation of the public sphere need not diminish the importance of analysis of 'difficult' policy debates, nor lead to their exclusion.

Increasingly, however, and as an apparent condition of the programme's return to a Monday night slot from its previous isolation on a Sunday, *Panorama*'s producers have tackled subjects more commonly associated with the tabloid-esque, human interest agenda of ITV1's *Tonight* with Trevor MacDonald – allegations of a papal cover-up in the paedophile priests scandal; consumer

affairs; allegations of corruption in professional football. Channel 4's *Dispatches* strand has undergone a similar process.

These trends reflect the broadcasters' awareness that the contemporary public sphere is indeed a very different entity from that of the past and must reflect the interests of ordinary human beings as they go about their everyday lives, which may include the state of professional football. The normatively-approved agenda of economics, politics and foreign affairs remains prominent in British current affairs programming, as Ofcom research cited above indicates, but now coexists with consumer affairs and coverage of life style questions such as healthy diet, which often have public policy dimensions. As part of its 2005 schedule Channel 4 broadcast Jamie Oliver's *School Dinners*. Over four episodes the celebrity chef poured scorn on the officially-approved menus of Britain's schools, linking them with the epidemic of childhood obesity and a decline in school discipline. Government and education authorities were robustly criticised, and given the opportunity to defend themselves, while the children and school staff were given lessons in how to eat healthily.

The programme was a ratings success and triggered extensive public debate on the appropriateness of the UK school dinner. When the debate was over, government policy had changed in the direction demanded by Oliver. As perceived by audiences (after research reported by Ofcom)¹⁹ this programme was current affairs, but of a new and welcome kind – accessible; polemical and opinionated; and inconceivable without the influence of reality TV on audience expectations. By 2005 formerly pessimistic commentators on British current affairs TV were welcoming the fact that “the Reithian high-culture approach has been replaced by a more democratic style that is more in keeping with the age and better exploits the medium”.²⁰ As the BBC's then head of Current Affairs production put it in 2003, “people do not want to be told what to think. The audience want to be engaged. They are no longer tolerant of the old didactic mission to explain”.²¹

To repeat – the Birtian ‘mission to explain’ is not redundant in the twenty-first century, nor is current affairs coverage of ‘serious’ and ‘difficult’ topics such as interest rates and the state of the global economy. But in an increasingly fragmented public sphere they are no longer sufficient to engage all of the audience in an environment where such engagement is crucial if current affairs is to survive.

Digital opportunities – new modes of distributing current affairs

In March 2005 Dawn Airey, the managing director of Sky Networks, delivered the Huw Wheldon Memorial Lecture to the Royal Television Society in which she argued that “in the digital era, the world's most accessible medium has become even more so and it has had a democratising effect on programme content, on the viewing experience, and on our ability to access information”.²²

As a consequence, she suggested, the traditional divide presumed to exist between “public service and popularism” in programme content was becoming increasingly redundant.

Viewers are no longer simply passive observers. Television has broken free from paternalistic rationing by an elite which once decreed what it ought and ought not to do. And, as it does so, the only path for those who work in the industry is to trust the viewers and the infinite choices they are now capable of making.

Launching the BBC’s Creative Future project in March 2005, Director-General Mark Thompson stressed their conclusion that “the most important change facing the media industry over the next decade will be the emergence of on-line delivery of media as a significant, and possibly the predominant, way by which content is consumed”.²³ It is not only the agenda and style of current affairs on British public broadcasting that is changing as the ‘Reithian’ ethos gives way to a less didactic, paternalistic approach; the ways in which audiences consume current affairs are going to change dramatically in the coming years. BBC current affairs strands such as *Panorama* and *Sunday A.M.* can already be viewed online at any time of the day or night, anywhere in the world, by anyone with a personal computer and a broadband internet connection. Before long it will be possible to watch any current affairs programme at the time and in the place of one’s choosing, in high quality video. The TV viewer, hitherto tied to the broadcasters’ schedules or dependent on recording for time-shifted viewing, will be liberated to become the scheduler of his or her own current affairs consumption through interactive TV, PC and even mobile phone. Downloaded programmes will be available for archiving, and a well-developed web site such as the BBC’s will provide links to unbroadcast material and other relevant sources of information which have gone into making the final transmitted programme. Current affairs programming will become part of a broader public service media ecology that is no longer restricted to the TV and radio platforms of the analogue era.

But digital technologies do not merely have the potential to expand access to consumption of current affairs – they could democratise and diversify the production process. Ofcom’s 2005 *Review of Public Service Broadcasting* proposed the establishment of a Public Service Publisher for the post-analogue era. This PSP would have its own budget and function as a commissioner and publisher of programmes, with a remit to widen the pool of producers of original content beyond the metropolitan media centres to the regions, and to independent producers. In a context where commercial free-to-air services such as ITV1 might find current affairs unaffordable, at least at the present level of output, the availability of the PSP would provide an alternative source of funding for producers and a means of distributing programmes across the many platforms capable of receiving them. The establishment of a PSP would mean, as Ofcom put it, that “more PSB content is produced than would otherwise be the case”,

and that content, including current affairs, could come from a wider pool of programme-makers than has traditionally had access to PSB.

The downside of this possibility is that the standards and safeguards which have traditionally accompanied current affairs public service broadcasting could be eroded as more independent producers become involved in production. In July 2007 the BBC, ITV and Channel 4 all became embroiled in a wave of controversy around the production of current affairs and other factual programmes. The BBC came under intense criticism for its misleading editing of a promotional clip for a documentary produced by independent company RDF on the Queen. A sequence of events involving the Queen and the photographer Annie Liebowitz was edited to heighten the dramatic impact of the promotional film in such a way that the viewer could be misled. BBC managers apologised profusely and suspended commissions from RDF, pending further inquiries. A number of high profile resignations followed. The incident was widely interpreted as a consequence not least of the tendency to commission current affairs outsourced to independent production companies either unaware of or more relaxed than in-house producers in their attitudes towards traditional BBC editorial practices. Should a Public Service Publisher come into existence along the lines mooted by Ofcom, there would be greater potential for errors and deviations from 'classic' UK PSB practice to slip through the editorial net. To safeguard against this potential dilution of PB standards it will be necessary to develop procedures and practices which clarify the status and provenance of independent current affairs programming.

Conclusion

The BBC, the regulator Ofcom and the government all share a public commitment to the future of current affairs in Britain's PSB's system, and an assumption that the BBC will remain the cornerstone of provision. Current affairs programming appears to be valued by the audience as an important public good in itself and there is no serious dissent for the view that this is an element of the UK's televisual culture which should be preserved in the era of digital television. It is also acknowledged that the traditional agendas and styles of British current affairs television are no longer adequate to the broader needs of the audience. The definition of current affairs has widened to include such as Jamie Oliver's *School Dinners* and the BBC's news agenda-based satirical panel show *Have I Got News for You*. The five terrestrial PSB channels will continue to make and broadcast current affairs, but their programmes will increasingly depart from the didactic approach traditionally favoured by the Reithian model. Networked current affairs on commercial channels will also continue to be produced, and with agendas and styles reflecting their different audiences, remits and regulatory obligations. But that they will have to compete for their place in the schedule is now accepted as a commercial reality with all this implies for the evolution of programming style and agenda.

The emerging new technologies, and proposals such as the Public Service Publisher, will play a significant part in filling the gap left by the demise of analogue and the end of spectrum scarcity. They may increase the scope for original and challenging current affairs, produced outside the established metropolitan centres. We see the rise of 'citizen journalism' and user-generated content distributed through Web 2.0 services such as YouTube. In the future, one might reasonably imagine, entire current affairs programmes could be made on digital video and uploaded to a PSP or some other hub, supplementing the established players' provision with diverse voices and opinions on the issues of the day. Not all such programmes would be worth watching, just as most blogs are ephemeral and trivial. But it is possible that, far from disappearing into the dustbin of televisual history with the passing of analogue, current affairs will be expanded, democratised and diversified in ways which we have not seen before, and which may help to enhance the civic role of public service television in the PSM future.

Notes

1. For the text of the Framework, or Royal Charter, which will govern the BBC from 2007-2016, see command paper 6872 published in July 2006 (www.reckon.co.uk/item/0e2022f9). In respect of current affairs the agreement states that in order to fulfil its remit to "sustain citizenship and civil society" the BBC must "give information about, and increase understanding of, the world through accurate and impartial news, other information, and analysis of current events and ideas". The Communications Act 2003 sets out the public service remit on the UK's commercial broadcasters.
2. The Provision of Public Affairs, London, Ofcom, July 2006 (www.ofcom.org.uk).
3. For a detailed account of recent trends in British access programming, see McNair et al, 2003.
4. The Office of Communications is mandated by the 2003 Communications Act to regulate British broadcasting, including its public service elements. As part of its function Ofcom commissions research to inform policy development, such as 'Public service television review: Current affairs genre analysis', from which these figures are taken.
5. The Provision of Public Affairs, London, Ofcom, July 2006 (www.ofcom.org.uk).
6. This confirmed Barnett's earlier observation that there had been "a growth of documentaries and serious factual programmes in peak time" in British television (Barnett, S. 'The way we watched', *Guardian*, March 21, 2005).
7. As of this writing, the trend continues, with three hours of current affairs programming on UK public service television on a Sunday alone, all addressing domestic politics: ITV1's Sunday Edition, BBC1's Sunday AM, and the same channels' Politics Show.
8. Gibson, O., 'BBC pledges more peak time current affairs', *Guardian*, February 16, 2005.
9. Brown, W., Wells, M., 'Dark days for Panorama', *Guardian*, March 20, 2006.
10. An innocent man shot dead by the Metropolitan police in the aftermath of the July 7 London bombings.
11. Audiences for current affairs programmes on UK PSB have tended to vary from 3-4 million for strands such as Panorama (BBC1) and Tonight with Trevor MacDonald (ITV1) to less than a million for strands such as Dispatches on Channel 4. Audiences for specific programmes can be much larger, depending on the topic. Panorama's famous 1997 interview with Princess Diana was watched by 22 million viewers, or seven times as many as normal.
12. Op.Cit.

13. For a flavour of how the BBC has tried to convey the importance of current affairs to its Charter renewal and licence fee lobbying, see a press release from February 2005, 'BBC announces plan to increase prominence and appeal of current affairs on BBC1'. www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2005/02_february/15/current.shtml.
14. From comments by Steve Hewlett made at an academic-industry seminar on the future of current affairs television held by Ofcom on March 28 2006.
15. The Provision of Public Affairs, London, Ofcom, July 2006 (www.ofcom.org.uk).
16. For a recent study of the development of reality TV in the UK see Hill, 2005.
17. Unpublished Ofcom paper, 'Public service television review: Current affairs genre analysis'.
18. Carmen, D., 'Pop Idol politics, it's a vote winner', *Sunday Times*, January 9, 2005.
19. The Provision of Public Affairs, London, Ofcom, July 2006 (www.ofcom.org.uk).
20. Barnett, S., 'The way we watched', *Guardian*, March 21 2005.
21. Quoted in unpublished Ofcom paper, 'Public service television review: Current affairs genre analysis'.
22. Dawn, A., 'Golden Age: Myth or Reality?', Huw Wheldon Memorial Lecture, Royal Television Society, 2004.
23. Text of official BBC statement, March 8 2005.

References

- British Broadcasting Corporation (2004) *Building Public Value: Renewing the BBC for a Digital World*. London: BBC.
- Cottle, S. (2004) *The Racist Murder of Stephen Lawrence: Media Performance and Public Transportation*. London: Praeger.
- Dovey, J. (2000) *Freakshow: First Person Media and Factual Television*. London: Pluto.
- Enli, G.S. (2007) *The Participatory Turn in Broadcast television: Institutional, Editorial and Textual Challenges and Strategies*. Ph.D Dissertation, University of Oslo, Norway.
- Hargreaves, I. and Thomas, J. (2002) *New News, Old News*. London: ITC/BSC.
- Hill, A. (2005) *Reality TV*. London: Routledge.
- McNair, B. (2002) *Striptease Culture: Sex, Media and the Democratization of Desire*. London: Routledge.
- McNair, B., Hibberd, M., and Schlesinger, P. (2003) *Mediated Access: Broadcasting and Democratic Participation in a Mediated World*. Luton, UK: University of Luton Press.
- Ofcom: *Review of Public Service Broadcasting*, Ofcom, London, 2005. (<http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/psb3/>)
- Seymour, E. and Barnett, S. (2006) *Bringing the World to the UK*. London: University of Westminster/3WE.
- Van Zoonen, L. (2004) *Entertaining the Citizen: When Politics and Popular Culture Converge*. UK: Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield.

‘Checking, Snacking and Bodysnatching’

How Young People Use the News and Implications for Public Service Media Journalism

Irene Costera Meijer

Public service broadcasting [PSB] as a general rule and in every national application has a mandate to provide information to the public it works to serve. This is a foundational task in the mission encapsulated by the trilogy of tasks formulated by Sir John Reith, first Director General of Britain’s BBC: to inform, to educate and to entertain. In PSB practice, the mandate to inform has been developed within a select group of characteristic genres that especially feature news and factual programming. This has been a traditional stronghold for PSB and remains such to an important degree. But the preferences, perspectives and perceptions of young people obviously represent the future and there the situation is far less certain.

This chapter discusses the results of research conducted in the Netherlands about how young people are using media for their news needs, how they think about news and information, and what all of this implies for PSB in the transition to public service media [PSM]. The research provides pertinent insights of central import because it signals fundamental changes in media, genre and the public’s notions of what counts as needed information services. The chapter critically engages new options by zooming in on the concerns of younger people. It is based on original research focused on the media experiences of 450 individuals between age 15 and 25 living in the Netherlands and from a variety of cultural and educational backgrounds.¹ We also conducted 50 interviews with professional journalists as our findings have implications for modes of news production.

Young people’s news consumption: Contradictory research results

Two 15-year-old high school students:

Interviewer: Do you watch the news often?

Lisselotte: Well.....

Jona: Well, ha ha, not too often.

Interviewer: First saying yes, like a good girl, and then, no, we actually do not watch news at all.

Lisselotte: But you hear about things anyway..

Jona: Yes, You simply hear it on the radio as well and then, yes,.

Interviewer: Via friends or..

Lisselotte: Sure, and from your parents of course and when truly something big happens..

Jona: Then you automatically hear about it.

Here we find clear signs that young people pay less attention to conventional media-based news, be it from television or newspapers. How generalizable the case is uncertain, however, due to contradictory results across studies, as we shall see.

Only twenty percent of 15 year olds have a broad interest in media information (Beekhoven & Van Well, 1998), and as much as fourteen percent of those between age 16 and 24 feel there is too much news on television (Hargreaves & Thomas, 2002). Although long assumed (and hoped) that young people inherently develop a need for news and information in adulthood, this may no longer be the case. The “age effect” is apparently being replaced by a “cohort-effect” (Buckingham, 2000a) implying their lack of interest in news is likely to persist in adult life (Raeymakers, 2003; Hargreaves & Thomas, 2002; Buckingham, 2000b; Barnhurst & Wartella, 1998). This has obvious implications for PSB that demand consideration with regard to news practices for and in PSM.

The declining appetite for news among young people has much to do with fundamental technological changes in our culture. With the emergence of the Internet, the introduction of various mobile phone technologies, and the expansion of commercial broadcasting, the amount of information and entertainment has grown inordinately. This influences where people look for information, how they interact with each other, and which entertainments they value (Huysmans et al., 2004). It turns out that for many young people conventional news is not appealing because they are not so much looking for “news” and information but rather for inspiration, a sense of belonging, and for what adds meaning to their lives (Piët, 2003; Nijs & Peters, 2002; de Haan et al., 2001; Pine & Gilmore, 2000). How can PSB news organisations which have long relied on a straightforward facts-and-opinions approach respond to this increasingly experience-oriented population (and ultimately society)?

We no longer encounter a straightforward, unambiguous interrelationship between watching television news, civic identity and social involvement among young people (in particular): “Whatever it means to them to be citizens, to be political does not seem to require the services of television news” (Barnhurst & Wartella, 1998: 304). Further, scholars including Raeymakers (2003), Barnhurst and Wartella (1998) and Beekhoven and Van Wel (1998) have observed that although young viewers may be hungry for news that is not to say they are satisfied with the ways in which news is currently offered on television. To

youngsters, many topics in routine news programmes are not appealing and staples like domestic politics, international politics, culture and the economy are of least interest. If they show concern for news at all, youngsters appear mainly interested in following headlines (Raeymakers, 2003; Groenhuijsen & Van Liempt, 1995), which is why some rather mockingly referred to youth as "spotlight chasers" (Hargreaves & Thomas, 2002). Barnhurst (1998:205) went so far as to claim that the products of institutional journalism are largely felt to be "irrelevant to their lives."

Most news seemingly belongs to a realm beyond the young person's everyday life, and actually not only for young people. In this respect, Bird (2003: 2) argued that much of the news hardly impresses most viewers of whatever age unless they are personally affected by what is being reported: "The images and messages wash over us, but most leave little trace, unless they resonate, even for a moment, with something in our personal or cultural experience". Putnam (1995 & 2000) and, more recently Mindich (2005), suggest the marginal significance of news and current affairs programmes in the lives of youngsters is indicative of their limited social involvement. Beekhoven and Van Wel (1998) have concluded that only when young people increasingly experience media worldviews as fragmented and gloomy do they tend to be less involved in global and political issues. This may be countered, according to several critics, by presenting news in more coherent ways or in more appealing formats (Raeymakers, 2003; Livingstone, 2002; Buckingham, 1999; Beekhoven & Van Wel, 1998; Katz, 1993; Fiske, 1992).

But another body of research suggests quite the opposite of all this. Richard Sambrook, Director of the BBC World Service and Global News Division and former Director of BBC News, thinks the meanings are mixed. He said that perhaps young people "no longer sit down with news as appointment viewing, but it would be wrong to conclude that they don't care about the news" (Hargreaves & Thomas, 2002: 85). That young people care about the news has been suggested by media research, as well. Gauntlett and Hill (1999) asked young British respondents to keep a diary of TV viewing behavior over a period of five years. Based on analysis of the diaries, these researchers claimed that news programmes increasingly became part of the youngsters' daily routines as they grew older. Data gathered by Raeymakers (2003: 173) indicated that in the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium over forty percent of young respondents (age 16-18) consume news regularly. The Dutch Central Data Agency also concluded that young people's interest in TV news increases as they mature. In the Netherlands, more than one-third of 15-17 year olds and more than half of those 18-24 reported following the news on a daily basis (CBS, 2003: 119).

Taken together, the research brings to light two paradoxical situations we are compelled to grapple with. First, various researchers suggest that young people show an increasing interest in news as they get older while ratings show that today's youth (age 15 to 25) watch significantly less television news and current affairs programming than audiences that were of the same age two decades ago (KLO, 2006). Second, most scholars explain low ratings by noting that news

items seldom touch on the lives and experience of young people and suggest that for news to become more relevant it should be linked more tightly with their sense of the world and also presented in a more entertaining style. Positive news items should be included, as well. But other research points to the fact that youngsters reject popularisation of television news, suggesting that in fact “the trend to more popular forms bears some responsibility for the rejection of television news by young people” (Barnhurst & Wartella, 1998: 302).

In this chapter we work to untangle the contradictions by excavating the lived realities of young people and news media. In order to establish how today’s young people in the Netherlands actually *experience* news, we adopt a more comprehensive approach.² If young adults do not feel attracted to news or never watch news, what is the source of their aversion? And what, in fact, do they like? What do they want to know? Can on-line services be a suitable alternative?

Information is becoming secondary to communication

The enormous popularity of cell phones, sending text messages (SMS) and chatting through MSN underscores the crucial importance of contact and interaction among young people. Related to this, the images of respective media are changing. While MSN mainly evokes positive associations among youngsters in our survey, many consider watching TV a “stupid activity”. They often feel that watching TV is doing nothing: it is useless, a last resort, a waste of time. Better to check with friends to see what they’re up to. As Cindy (age 16, advanced high school) observed: “I really do not watch TV any longer because I am simply on MSN all the time; MSN has truly taken the place of TV”. In that light it is unsurprising that the amount of time spent watching TV as a percentage of young people’s activities recently dropped for the first time (Huysmans et al., 2004).

And yet television remains important, not least because it offers topics for conversation. If enough young people watch a programme this stimulates the others to also watch because not watching means automatic exclusion from the mainstream of cohort communication. Sjoerd (age 15, basic high school) indicated that it is important “to keep up with the times a little bit [because] when everybody is talking about Idols and you’re not watching it you’re simply unable to join in the conversation”.

The indications suggest that the informative function of media, and of single programmes, is becoming secondary to their communicative function in social networks. Our interviews reveal the enormous passion and eagerness with which young people talk about media. They freely discuss television programmes and the individuals that appear in them, and gladly offer their opinions on the ‘stupidity’ of one news anchor, the ‘twaddle’ of this or that talk show host, and the ‘boring talking heads’ that appear on the national news. Television programmes are celebrated as “fun, wonderful, truly inspiring and fantastic”, or slated as “trashy, bullshit,” or “crap”.

From education to discovering and reflection

The criteria youngsters use to evaluate programmes are tied to their effects: being funny, gripping and pleasurable. But this is not to say that young viewers only like to watch TV to be entertained. Their motivations are more complex because they also want to be captivated by programmes that encourage them to reflect, and by programmes, web sites and channels that encourage users to *discover* new things. Being fun and being educational are not mutually exclusive; they are intertwined in processes of reflection and discovery.

The chances of an A-ha experience offer strong incentive. When asked what counts as "interesting information", young people say it is information "on things as they are, such as why a day has twenty-four hours instead of ten or one hundred or twenty" (Bas, age 16, advanced high school). Youngsters want to learn new things and to understand how things work. This is likely why they enjoy subscription channels and programming with a thematic emphasis, e.g., National Geographic, Animal Planet and the Discovery Channel. Their curiosity also applies to programming that allows them to identify with views and lifestyles in other cultures and countries. Youngsters enjoy imagining what it is like to be someone else. They want to feel and understand how other people live and what motivates them. Even when it concerns worrisome social problems such as AIDS, racism, drugs or violence, they want to *experience* peoples' individual *stories*. For most young adults information has more impact when couched in terms of lived experience.

Niels (age 22, college): Well, for instance, that programme on BNN, *This Is How You Fuck*, and also how these youngsters who have AIDS or an STD or so, how they tell their experiences; eh, I actually find it interesting.

Interviewer: Sure, why is that interesting to you, why is it important to know?

Niels: Well, you start thinking more about it, eh, about whether it is useful to do without, say. It is just real, the people to whom it happened can just tell about their experiences I feel.

Interviewer: You can learn from it.

Niels: Yes.

Young people do not shun serious topics. They are concerned about drugs, violence, AIDS and racism. But they also feel that serious information need not automatically exclude humour or a light tone. Many youngsters make no distinction between entertainment and information. In both cases, "fun" or "interesting" is a precondition to continue watching. And young people indicate interest in shocking, bizarre, funny and abnormal events. Odd humour and strange rumours attract their interest and attention. If a programme does not have some ingredient that impresses, surprises, amazes or shocks, it provides little use value for starting a chat with friends.

Moreover, having an educational element is not restricted to 'serious' genres. Award winning drama and commercial soap drama may stimulate young viewers to reflect on their own lives. Young people derive knowledge about sexuality and relationships as much from soap operas as from their parents or teachers. In this respect our findings agree with those of Buckingham and Bragg (2003). In fact, soaps can even be considered more informative because youngsters feel less embarrassed when watching issues in portrayals attuned to their needs and interests. Consider the following conversation about soaps by Linda (age 16, advanced high school) and Mirthe (age 15, advanced high school):

Linda: Then they are pregnant again so those teen-mothers, well, that is something to avoid. I know so of course, but of some things it is good to be reminded by seeing them.

Interviewer: Can you give an example?

Mirthe: In *Good Times* [Dutch RTL soap opera], say, they also used to have such problems or so, eh, yes, she had anorexia and, eh, that kind of thing.

Linda: Yes, you see that and then you really think, oh, I really should never let things get that far or so.

Mirthe: Or, eh, what else do you have... That she became handicapped and still wanted to be accepted or what not, and treated as a normal human being rather than as a handicapped one. Such things, you know. All are models, including the negative ones, of course, of which you say: No, this is very wrong; this is not acceptable.

This desire for social learning likely also explains the popularity of Reality TV among youngsters. They enjoy an inside look at the 'real lives' of popular singers, the wives of famous soccer players or the participants of *Temptation Island*. There is a lot of truth in the claim by Steven Johnson (2005) that the pleasure and attraction of reality shows are in the kind of involvement they organise: They challenge *emotional intelligence*. In watching them we learn to read, to assess and to respond appropriately to emotional signals. The popularity of soap opera and Reality TV (especially reality soap) might be interpreted as a sign of the increasing importance of communicative capabilities for young people's survival in a multicultural community. Entertainment can be just as informative and useful as informative programming. Function does not necessarily follow format in the experience of young adults.

Young people and their experience of news

Nearly all of the 452 youngsters whose experiences we recorded consider news a major genre. As Laura (20) indicated: "My parents always told me that news mattered and that it is important to be informed about current developments, at home as well as abroad". Watching the news is good for you, so everyone

should do that. Although a small (well educated) group claims to be watching news out of a sense of duty – to stay informed, able to join in the conversation and not to be embarrassed – these considerations apply less to most young viewers. While many do feel an urgency to be informed, they rely on parents, family or friends to sound the alarm when something major happens. Most young people do not watch news as part of any daily routine, in rather stark contrast with older groups. Young people watch news because the TV is on and others are watching, or because they have nothing else to do at that moment, or even out of some sense of nostalgia. If while zapping they happen to run across news some may watch for a short time but most will move on after catching the headlines.

How is it possible that most young adults believe news is very important but so many also feel it has little actual significance to their lives? We tried to address this contradiction by locating news consumption in the broader context of media use.

Real news, fake news and the double viewing paradox

Surprisingly, when asked how they preferred to see the news presented our interviewees responded that news should remain the way it is. This applies for newspapers and television and raises a curious question: Why do youngsters believe that this TV format or genre should not be changed even when they aren't attracted to it? We found that some young people simply can't be bothered; they are not interested in the problem, let alone the solution. But for many there is something seemingly sacrosanct about the news genre's features. Youngsters are very aware of the social status and civic importance attributed to quality news. But most importantly here, youngsters rely on the familiarity of conventions to make distinctions between real news and other news, between important and trivial news, between weighty matters and light news, between quality information and popular entertainment.

In agreement with Barnhurst and Wartella (1998), we found that young people do not appreciate the "soapification" of news; they typically reject the notion of making news more fun and appealing to watch as any goal in and of itself. Youngsters want news to address major issues and to be reliable, not to be deliberately made more entertaining. Debby (age 19, advanced high school) admits that she hardly watches news but that when she does, she wants to watch "quality news".

Significantly, we found this attitude is in part due to young people's focus on and awareness of brands, and especially the significance of differentiating between A-quality and B-quality. This logic applies to news, as well. They expect a public service newscaster to live up to its A-quality news brand reputation. This means presenting the news in a serious way: one that is true, objective and reliable. It is the "real thing". It is a solid image that commercial news broadcasts in the Netherlands may never compete with because when respondents talk about news on commercial TV – even the main commercial

news programme which in the Netherlands is not really so different from the public news programme – they tend to refer to it as “B-news”. Some even use disqualifying terms including “exploitative, overly commercial, keen on sensation, nonsense news” and “superfluous news”. Jona (15) and Lisselotte (15) claim they prefer “real” news over “fake” news, although paradoxically they often enjoy the latter more. But watching “real news” gives them the satisfaction of doing something perceived to be *useful*:

Lisselotte: Well, [they tell you] that somewhere twin sheep are born or so. Well, I just don't need to [watch].

Jona: Yes, sometimes it is funny to see, but, true enough, I'd rather watch the real news..

Lisselotte: Because then you do it for a reason.

Young people do not want news to be deliberately made more entertaining because that could blur distinctions between A-status and B-status which functions as a *narrative signpost*. When something of major importance happens they want to be able to recognise and rely on a serious public news programme to make sense of it. Youngsters feel that making news more entertaining reduces real news to fake news. But the double viewing paradox is that their satisfaction about, and even interest in, “serious” news does not automatically cause them to watch this kind of news on any routine basis, even while their contempt for light news programmes (“stupid,” “junk”) does not inhibit them from enjoying that. This paradoxical behaviour among young people is closely bound up with how they conceive the term “news”. News is important and educational; their associations exclude entertainment. If a news-like programme allows for watching in a relaxed manner, many young people feel it cannot be a good news programme – if news at all.

Thus and in contrast to results reported by British researchers Gauntlett and Hill (1999), our study found no causal relationship between the significance attributed by young people to news and their actual viewer behaviour. In this respect an observation by Elisabeth Bird (2003:29) is compelling: “Thus while many people feel the obligation to be ‘well-informed’ and listen to ‘important news,’ their emotions and their attention are caught by dramatic, exciting stories”.

News as public service and basic facility

Thus and at least with regard to youngsters, public service news is caught in a complex and probably irresolvable paradox: When news is presented in a serious and high quality way it is perceived as the real thing but considered too boring to watch (with the exception of natural or man-made disasters). Yet when news is made more appealing and accessible the ratings rise but it is no longer perceived as real news. The PSB news brand suffers a loss of credibility, and that undermines broad social legitimacy. We interpret this seemingly

illogical viewing behaviour with reference to the conviction of most young people, as we discovered through our interviews, that news is, or should be, a basic social service comparable to social security, health insurance, or family care. One must be able to rely on PSB news availability whenever it is needed, preferably free of charge, around the clock and seven days a week. This function as an essential public service bridges the gap between high appreciation for news and low viewer rates. Such ratings do not in fact say anything about the *significance* attached by young viewers to a good public news *supply*. Crucially, high ratings tell us about the programme's entertaining character but are no fair standard for measuring substance or service importance.

Captivating a younger audience

Talking with young people about the desired form and content of news leads to a quite limited, 'inside the box' story about news; news *ought not* to be fun. We discovered this at an early stage in our research and decided to change approach by skipping the word 'news' in the interviews and substituting "important information" and "informative programmes."

Whether or not youngsters watch informative programmes depends on one criterion above all: Does the programme offer *topics for conversation* by supplying interesting facts, analyses and experiences? Judging television programmes on their power to captivate viewers is tied to the general function that television has for young people. By and large they watch to have fun, to relax and to be entertained. As Michael (age 18, higher education) explained: "To me television is important because it is where you get your daily dose of entertainment when you are tired and no longer feel like thinking anymore and want to relax".

When Mia (age 16, advanced high school) was asked what she considers vital information, she mentioned that apart from news on world events and the weather, she values "news on fashion and make-up". Many girls respond that they like to see news *and* fashion in informative programming for youngsters. They realize that fashion does not belong in the same category as news by traditional standards, but they do not consider addressing fashion as any disqualification. The information from programmes such as *What Not To Wear*, *Top Gear* or *Changing Rooms* and the information from the public service newscast can have *equal significance* to this group. Politics and economics are often considered less relevant to their life than current lifestyle trends. This is a ridiculed aspect among many traditionalists, but in fact television is teaching young people how to "read" others precisely *by* their appearance. This is not nearly as 'superficial' as some seem to think: Young people think information about fashion can be crucial because appearance has a role in decisions about hiring and promotion.

Multi-tasking, multi-layering & information overload

Many youngsters pick up a lot of information without watching a specific programme attentively. Two decades of watching increasingly complex, multithreaded and multilayered programming have honed their “reading” skills (Johnson, 2005). They have learned to skip ‘useless’ information on every medium. Furthermore, youngsters tend to engage simultaneously in multiple media activities (listening to the radio, checking e-mail, searching for something on the Internet) and other activities (doing homework, doing the dishes). What is offered on television or radio is often too simple, too ‘single layered’ to absorb their full attention. Young people in particular (and older people, as well) are by now used to simultaneously processing a lot more information than most informative websites or television or radio programmes offer. If a programme or website contains too few storylines or insufficiently complex information, they look for other activities or surf channels to avoid boredom. Young people feel at ease with loads of information because it allows them to taste from many different dishes in a short span. As a 25-year-old student put it:

I enjoy it that you can pick up something from all sorts of media but that you are not stuck with only one source, so the nice thing about news is that it is short-lived and that it is always available and, eh, because there is so much of everything that, eh, it is pleasurable that you can move up and down between a variety of things.

Young people have learned to cope with “information overload” (Lyman & Varian, 2000). One way of coping is channel surfing, yet another aspect of contemporary television use that is often ridiculed but deserves reconsideration.

For young people zapping is a good way to quickly gain a general impression about something. Young people like ‘grazing’ across a wide variety of information sources. Zapping is like scanning images instead of reading texts attentively. So while from a conventional perspective zapping seems superficial, for youngsters it is a *strategy* for collecting information, and one geared to securing broad contextual insight rather than in-depth knowledge. So young viewers do not only zap because they are bored with what they see (de Mul, 1995). Zapping is also a way of checking whether one missed something important, of finding out if perhaps there is more to be gained from viewing elsewhere. Youngsters are not cutting themselves off; they are continuously gathering bits and pieces of information from a large variety of sources. Far from a mindless activity, zapping requires concentrated effort and information processing intelligence.

From watching to checking the news: Snacking 24/7

The character of basic public service news is that it must be available *when you need it*. That facilitates feelings of security. Of course this preference for a 24-hour news service is not limited to a younger audience. According to Lewis

et al (2005) mature audiences are increasingly moving from conventional bulletins to the 24-hour news channels. Ofcom (2004) data suggests that between 1998 and 2003 the audience shares for the early evening news programmes on BBC and ITV declined by 16 per cent and 37 per cent, respectively.

Mindich (2005) discounted the Internet as a source of news because the news is not the prime reason for an individual's Internet use. But our data suggest that even if news is not the main reason for an individual's Internet use, many youngsters use the Internet regularly (sometimes even *hourly*) to check the state of world affairs. They may not feel the need to be fully informed citizens, but many have a regular urge to monitor and quickly check the news (Graber, 2003; Zaller, 2003; Graber, 2001; Schudson, 1999). So although young people may not like conventional news as a genre, they are eager to be informed about the latest news. One way of finding out is by quickly checking a news site. Erik (age 25, of Chinese background) visits a Dutch news site *nu.nl* at least ten times a day: "Well, it is very easy to check; you see immediately when something has happened. It hardly takes time; it is really a matter of a flash and you are gone again". The Internet as a medium lends itself perfectly. The current generation of teenagers and people in their early twenties grew up with the World Wide Web. For them this is a *traditional* medium. David (advanced high school, 19) uses the medium to keep abreast of topical matters:

I spend much time on the computer/Internet and that is also where I get all my news. After all, news will be on the Internet before it is broadcast on television. So it is perhaps, or likely, a vanishing medium. Almost everything on TV can also be downloaded through the Internet.

Youngsters also stress the greater efficiency of news web sites. A student of Chinese descent (24) said she "does watch TV but not really for news because it contains things that I hardly find interesting, while on the sites I can select the news I want to read". A Dutch student (20) said she relies more on the Internet because "it is nice and fast and comprehensive; you can quickly move on to the next topic and you also get more entertaining news". The advantages of Internet news over television are that its news is clickable, *always* available and *continually* updated. Moreover, each individual decides which news items to check in more detail. As another Dutch student (22) commented: "If for instance you are watching the news and something that interests you comes last, this means you have to sit through the entire programme. But on the Internet you can see right away, eh, what you want to know, and what is happening".

Some have rid themselves of TV sets all together and use their computer screens for both television and the Internet. As Steven (age 21, college) commented, "I just have a computer in my living room. It is for Internet and also to follow the news and that sort of thing. Recently I bought a TV card which allows me to watch TV on my computer. It saves space, for otherwise I would have to buy a separate TV set". That is a trend for PSB to carefully, closely monitor not only for content-related concerns but also because of funding implications.

The desire to be quickly informed about what matters personally is not only a need for well educated youngsters. The 21 year old cook's aid, Achmed-Amin (of Moroccan background), said he relies more on the Internet than television because it is more informative about happenings in his country of origin. Only when specific events are also covered by Dutch television, such as the earthquake in Al-Husima (2004), did he watch TV more. Young people do not want to postpone their need for news to a fixed schedule or any appointed moment of the day; they want to be able to satisfy the need instantly. As such, the Internet more closely fits their need for "snack" news than television.

All of this strongly suggests that much in traditional views is rather pejorative and not actually based on understanding media use strategies, which as strategies inherently imply intelligence. Youngsters use media in ways that are rational in strategy and effective in tactics.

A multi-voiced imagination

Youngsters tend to experience the world as a much smaller space than older generations. But although national boundaries are less and less important, growing up in a multicultural society has taught them from an early age that the world is not becoming less complex – quite the contrary. Their world no longer speaks in one voice; their world is multi-voiced and they want news to reflect this multivocality (Shohat & Stam, 1994). In their experience, objectivity does not exist. Although young people prefer informative programmes (and websites) which make them feel *at home* by demonstrating real understanding of them, they are not inclined to identify with a single standpoint (not even when it comes from a 'young' perspective). Instead, they zap to get the flavours of multiple angles (cf. Huesca & Dervin, 2003).

Aesthetics (colour, imagery, design, presentation etc.) are just as important for creating an *inclusive understanding atmosphere* as a particular selection. For that reason, it is essential that news not be made from a narrow white male perspective, i.e. from the mainstream, paternalist view. Again, this suggests the scale of challenge PSB faces. Unless the information is clearly marked as "snack news", it should provide variety in images, a range of different views, angles and experiences, and it should equally cater to male and female viewers, urban and rural viewers, as well as viewers from all ethnicities. All of this fits splendidly with the PSB ethos, but is as clearly a defining challenge for PSM practice.

Explicitly, their concern is not pluralism (different opinions) but "multivocality" (Shohat & Stam, 1994) or what Gans (1980) called "multiperspectival news". Instead of the conventional approach of delivering disembodied pros and cons, young people prefer a range of embodied voices and experiences. Denied multiple perspectives, those who are interested will start zapping and scanning various media and news sources (Internet, newspapers, radio, NOS, RTL, BBC, Euronews, Al Jazeera, etc.) to develop a sense of what is going on in its perspective complexity. This implies that PSM journalism should not be focused as much or so much of the time on finished stories that tell a single

truth from an authoritative perspective. Instead the topics might well be done greater justice and with higher interest value when presented from multiple perspectives. As Rik (age 23, student) put it: "I have trouble watching the main news broadcast because it is read as if it is true ... with more people you get more vantage points. Everyone has a different point of view".

All of this strongly implies that although pre-packaged opinions may be easy to digest, young viewers want to be challenged to think for themselves. That is facilitated by *experiencing* the information. Richel (age 19, basic high school, half Moluccan) and Els (19, basic high school, white) enjoy watching a multicultural PSB programme presented by an Amsterdam lawyer, Prem Radhakishun (*Premtime*), because he does not force opinions on viewers but instead makes them live through a variety of viewpoints. The girls refer to a Premtime broadcast on the issue of some Moroccan youngsters who were not admitted to a sports shop. By using shots from the CCTV (closed circuit television) camera and a hidden camera, the programme did justice to both the anger of the Moroccan boys who were thrown out ("we were just looking") and the anger of the shop owner ("they were just messing around"). As Richel puts it, "he shows it from the angle of all parties involved".

Presenting multiple vantage points (multivocality) also means reaching out to a culturally more diverse audience. Living in a multicultural society has taught young people that there is no single truth. This does not imply that truth doesn't exist or has become superfluous. Truth is more important than ever. But they know it cannot be reduced to a single view or standpoint. This is why young people have a preference for programmes that show multiple stories and realities side by side, and which do not force them into identifying themselves with only one – by definition – one-sided, position.

Bodysnatching: From viewers to participants

The need for multivocality also has to do with another need for news among young people that is not geared to a particular incident or news fact. They desire to *live through* the event, preferably from the perspective or, more precisely from the *body*, of the protagonists. This need, in some ways similar to the experience of playing video and computer games, we call "bodysnatching". As shocking as it may be, young people want to imagine the exact situation of those terrorists who flew into the Twin Towers on 9/11. Similarly, youngsters may not be interested in all the bomb attacks that occur in Iraq or Israel but they are eager to understand what it is like for a 14-year-old Palestinian boy who fails to detonate the bomb in his suicide vest. They want to know whether the boy went to school earlier that day, what he had for lunch, how he felt, and how his parents and siblings are responding.

This desire to participate in the news is about a need to more deeply, personally understand. Although occasionally youngsters want to experience and know all the ins and outs of specific events, more typically they are after a specific news story's "thrill" or "wow-climax" (cf. Jenkins, 2007). They want,

however briefly, to experience that for themselves. They literally want to get a feel for the emotions involved. How does it feel to escape death by drowning? What did princess Maxima feel during her marriage ceremony?

This is admittedly uncomfortable territory for traditional news producing organisations inside PSB, and possibly more broadly. Is “bodysnatching” motivated exclusively by a lust for sensation or malicious delight? According to our research, quite literally youngsters want to get a *true* impression of an event by *taking part* in it vicariously. Only then can they grasp what it *means*. For youngsters it is not enough to know about something from the outside in; they feel compelled to understand the thing from the inside out. That can only happen when and if they are able to exercise emotional intelligence.

Young people set great store by images, however poor their technical quality, because via images they can more easily imagine how a particular event occurred. For instance, Ria (age 17, basic high school) told us how TV images corrected her own reading of stories.

Ria: Well, say, in the news on Iraq or so. I find they do a good job of showing through images what is going on ... also by having soldiers talk about what they experience over there. They do not simply tell there is a war in Iraq and that this or that is going on; they really show images of what really takes place, such as people in the streets who are shooting with their gun into the air: that is real, so you just know what is going on over there because it is all very hard to imagine...

Interviewer: So what do images add to a story?

Ria: Well, just the things and the thoughts. When someone is telling something you start thinking about it on your own, but when you see images that accompany the story, you think, well, oh wow, this is not what I thought! Images really give you something that adds to the story.

Interviewer: And why do you like to have images with a story?

Ria: They allow you simply to know what it's about, I believe. Yes, you have a story then and you start making up your own image of it. But sometimes your image is wrong, you think it is your way but it is very different. This is why it is good indeed to have images that go with the story!

Images do not exclusively have to be provided by television, of course. Video reports via the Internet also satisfy the need to experience an event, especially when multiple voices can be heard. In practice that often means that several mini-documentaries are advisable, with each made to present an event from a distinctive angle.

Snack news, slow news, checking and body snatching

Although young people often express a dislike for news as a genre, they have certain information needs that tie in with various news formats. In this

respect it is possible to distinguish between “snack news” and “slow news”. In snacking, speed, taste and calories come first – not the quality of the food. Accordingly, snack news requires a specific approach: it is fast, often involves live coverage, and should be insider’s news. The live aspect is more important than the quality of the story and images. This agrees with the observation Scannel offered (2005) in suggesting that the key attribute of broadcasting is its essential live-ness. Images dispatched via mobile phone will be blurred and less sharp, but they raise the level of “realness” and offer a sense of being “on top of things.” Most young people emphasise that information should be presented in a concise and factual manner, and whenever possible be “warm” (= “involved”), “multivoiced” and “colourful” (in aesthetics and embodiment). As long as the news impresses through its visual language and multi-layered information, and addresses the viewer on a cognitive as well as an emotional level, news does not need to tell complete, perfect stories.

We define ‘snacking’ news as quickly checking the headlines with a desire to be on top of the latest issues. It is a matter of wanting to be informed not as a goal in its own right, as Klaus Brun Jensen (1986) stated twenty years ago, but rather to be able to “start or join in the conversation” – it is about information in the service of communication. Young people actually talk about most information in an Internet format even when referring to TV or newspaper news. Among youngsters transitory and grazing use of media does not lead to solid knowledge, but rather to “impressions”. Only when a news topic or programme ‘really’ makes an impression will they stop zapping and become deeply attentive. Snacking and zapping are geared to gain a broad and contextual sense of what is going on so they are able to situate specific events. It is not about having in-depth knowledge or developed opinions.

Snack news, as a particular format, is understood as concise bits of information about the latest most important and most interesting events or developments which allows young people to engage in small talk. For a real conversation, however, they rely on ‘slow news’ which is needed to understand (*verstehen*) events. Slow news calls for quality images that not only illustrate a story but add their own narrative dimension. Young people appreciate slow ‘news’ (which does not have to be about ‘new’ events) to develop a *deep, multi-layered* picture of something, to grasp the complexities of the story about an event. How and why could it happen? For example, at the time of our interviews a Dutch teacher was killed in school by a student. Young people wanted to know all sorts of things about this tragedy: who was the young student who did it, where did he get his gun, with which values did he grow up, what are his friends and family like, who disliked him, and why wasn’t the police able to prevent this? They also wanted more explanation about that specific school’s organization, its teachers, its teaching methods, its student policies, etc. One student of Turkish background could not imagine that the system itself had nothing to do with this particular episode. She was interested in learning everything about the killer’s social background. Slow news is about creating a virtual ‘world’

for the temporary user of the medium to make him or her deeply understand the dilemmas and layered complexities of particular crucial events and situations (cf. Sconce, 2004).³ This helps explain why young adults often like the documentary like the ones from Michael Moore.

Quality news for the communication generation? Implications for Public Service Media.

The argument in this chapter has focussed on the role of news in the lives of today's young media users. Fundamental changes in the use of information among an ever larger group of people, and young people in particular, call for a sustained rethink on the functionality of specific journalistic views about quality. If newspapers, news sites, news programmes, current affairs programmes and opinion magazines are to cater to the imagination of young people, they need to be prepared to move beyond the *conventional* contradictions so often assumed between quality and popularity, private and public spheres, emotions and reason, autonomy and situated-ness. In a nutshell, what counts as quality journalism will be defined in new ways and on new (digital) platforms that must challenge traditional PSB journalists and news organizations.

First, the nearly automatic refrain by professional journalists and other interested parties that accommodating young people really means popularisation and that this equals trivialisation deserves serious critical reflection. Our research supports the suggestion by Steven Johnson (2005) that the popular media have, on the contrary, sharpened people's minds by continuously confronting them with a steady stream of increasingly complex and multi-layered stories.⁴ People become increasingly accustomed to multitasking and are able to comfortably handle a much higher 'input' pace, open endings, a broader range of characters, various and even hybrid styles, multiple-threaded narratives and complex subject matter. In becoming PSM, news must adapt to an increasingly media savvy and media literate audience. If news sites and news programmes cannot meet and satisfy these more sophisticated demands, their "users" will move to other programmes, media and sites – and there are more and more to choose between. In short, PSB news must *elaborate and elevate its standards* to accommodate the developing tastes and capabilities of growing segments of the population.

Second, it is important for news organisations to reflect on the long unquestioned consequences of uncritical subordination to the historic standards of newsworthiness in journalistic reporting of the private sphere to the public sphere. For example, if it is true that the look and clothing of (future) employees are of crucial importance to many businesses, why would information about lifestyles, fashion and make-up be less relevant than information about changes in social security?

Thirdly, for young people who communicate with each other constantly and intensely, questions of relationships, emotions, friendship and respect are

vital. It is important to take emotions as seriously as rational claims or abstract rules when it comes to gaining more insight into contemporary culture. If one views emotionality, like rationality, as an instance of moral and political concern (Nussbaum, 1986, 1990), exercising control over emotions by journalists is less important than careful discussion of their appropriateness. Young people are very aware of the crucial importance of communicative capabilities when dealing with (political) conflicts. More and more people seem to agree that news stories which fail to adequately give an account of the emotions involved in a certain event could be considered less informative than those who do them justice. Evenso, many journalists seem to lack a language to seriously reflect upon this dimension.

Fourth, in a society where communication has overriding significance one is compelled to critically reflect on the dominance of any autonomous view of human identity. It may well be the case that PSB journalism will benefit from devoting more attention to the social, religious and psychological dimensions of the lives of those who are in the spotlight, since conventional explanatory frames for describing or understanding individual behaviour, such as universal rules of conduct, private gain or self-interest, frequently fall short. In a multicultural society it is crucial that the media take into account the existence of alternative forms of individuality, identities that differ from the Western, Judaic-Christian liberal model of the white independent male (Costera Meijer, 2001a; Costera Meijer & Van Dijck, 2000; Harrington, 1997; Held, 1993; Gilligan, 1982).

Thus, the issue of what is and is not 'newsworthy' and how to tell a news story in order to do justice to all the relevant dimensions (public and private, emotional and rational) is of decisive importance in the PSM context. This in turn raises the need to reconsider the criteria used to determine that. The future of news is perhaps neither in television nor in the paper but rather on the Internet. The Internet is already clearly developing its potential to integrate all media (audio, video, text) and might be better suited to offer snack news and even slow (bodysnatching) journalism.

A crucial factor that contributes to the enhancement of the quality of news involves the newsmakers themselves, as well as lots of creativity and time. Newsmakers need the time for experimenting with formats and angles, and for reflecting on journalistic or editorial choices. For example, new legislation on social security is likely to have quite different implications for a fifteen-year-old schoolgirl, two people in their fifties planning to marry, and a sixty-year-old Moroccan immigrant with remigration plans. A well-made news item on the issue reflects the different angles and perspectives – and that means multivocality. Becoming accustomed with, and accommodative to, a "postmodern" professional journalism vocabulary could be part of the effort (Costera Meijer, 2006). After all, changes in the views on media, media usage and the role of news do not only occur among young viewers. For a growing number of those in the age group 30+ the distinctions between public and commercial, TV and Internet, information and entertainment are also blurring. As individuals

become familiar with new communication technologies they tend to develop new ways of dealing with media.

Finally, our research supports the creation of an ambitious Public Service Media Web Engine – a customisable gateway to public service media content, as well as other noncommercial media – to be available online and on-demand via home computers, PDAs, iPods and other portable digital platforms.

Notes

1. The original research was done under my supervision by 37 bachelor and graduate students who were guided and directed by two junior researchers, Robert Adolffson and Marjolein van Vossen. I'm most grateful for their huge contribution to the project.
2. The research was sponsored by the Dutch public newscaster NOS Journaal. In addition to data derived from more than 50 interviews with professional journalists (working for public and commercial broadcasters), 100 street interviews with individuals of various ages and backgrounds at various locations in the Netherlands our argument is based on data from 239 in-depth interviews, 148 news biographies, 65 online questionnaires that directly and indirectly address young people's patterns of information consumption and content analysis of 147 news items that appeared on Dutch and foreign stations (BBC, ARD, VRT, US). Furthermore, we interviewed 43 students of various journalism schools on their preferences and aversions regarding news. Where existing methods failed to produce useful results, we adapted our tools or invented new ones (cf. Gauntlett, 2003). Because our investigation was sponsored by NOS News, the number one Dutch news program, our interviewers gained easy access to places where young people gather: trains, schools, universities, shopping malls, fast food restaurants, sports cafeterias. By using an approach called "triangulation" (Yin, 1984), we aspired to avoid the problems that may have caused the paradoxical results of earlier news research. The underlying idea is that one can be more confident with a result if different methods lead to the same result. In addition I relied on compeers – the "problematic" group itself – as student-researchers, and in their selection I included both news "junks" and news "haters." Furthermore, our investigations did not exclusively focus on the genre's positive relevance to them; after all, we had to account for young people's aversion to news as a genre as well. Third, in our interviews we not only addressed news as presented in various media, but also investigated popular genres among young people (reality soap, sports etc.) for clues as to their popularity. We related young people's use of television to their usage of radio, newspapers, mobile phones, and the internet. Earlier publications based on this research include: Irene Costera Meijer (2006) *De toekomst van het nieuws*. Amsterdam: Otto Cramwinckel en Irene Costera Meijer (2007), 'The Paradox of Popularity', *Journalism Studies*, 8:1, 96-116
3. For example, compare the increased complexities of sitcoms like SEINFELD, SOUTHPARK or CHEERS with the easy digestible but just as popular shows from the sixties like I LOVE LUCY or the eighties like THE BILL COSBY SHOW. The later shows demand much more from their audiences and it is precisely this demanding character that forms part of their allure.
4. The challenge to really captivate this audience seems the construction of free and easily accessible news 'games' which will make it possible to live through an event from all possible (embodied!) positions and perspectives.

References

- Barnhurst, K.G. (1998) Politics in the Fine Meshes: Young Citizens, Power and the Media. *Media, Culture and Society*, 20, pp.201-218.
- Barnhurst, K.G. and Wartella, E. (1998) Young Citizens, American TV Newscasts and the Collective Memory. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 15, pp.279-305.
- Barnhurst, K.G. and Wartella, E. (1991) Newspapers and Citizenship: Young Adults' Subjective Experience of Newspapers. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 8, pp.195-209.
- Beekhoven, S. and Van Wel, F. (1998) Jongeren en Nieuwsmedia. *Tijdschrift voor Communicatiewetenschap*, 26, pp.30-39.
- Bird, S.E. (2003) *The Audience in Everyday Life: Living in a Media World*. London: Routledge.
- Buckingham, D. (1999) Young People, Politics and News Media: Beyond Political Socialisation. *Oxford Review of Education*, 25, pp.171-184.
- Buckingham, D. (2000) *The Making of Citizens: Young People, News and Politics*. London: Routledge
- Buckingham, D. and Bragg, S. (2004) *Young People, Sex and the Media*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (2003) *Jeugd 2003, Cijfers en Feiten*. Voorburg, Netherlands: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek.
- Costera Meijer, I. and Reesink, M. (2000) *Reality Soap! Big Brother en de Opkomst van het Multimediaconcept*, Amsterdam: Boom
- Costera Meijer, I. (2001) The Public Quality of Popular Journalism: Developing a Normative Framework. *Journalism Studies*, 2(2), pp.189-205
- Costera Meijer, I. and Van Dijck, B. (2001) *Talk / Show: Kwaliteit en Ethiek van Praatprogramma's*. Amsterdam: Veen
- Costera Meijer, I. (2003). What Is Quality Television News? A Plea for Extending the Professional Repertoire of Newsmakers. *Journalism Studies*, 4(1), pp.15-29.
- Costera Meijer, I. (2006) *De Toekomst van het Nieuws*. Amsterdam: Otto Cramwinckel
- European Commission (2003) *Time Use at Different Stages of Life; Results from 13 European Countries*, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities [electronic version]. http://europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/Public/dashop/print-catalogue/EN?catalogue=Eurostat&product=KS-CC-03-001-_-N-EN, Accessed January 2004
- Fiske, J. (1992) Popularity and the Politics of Information. In Dahlgren, P. and Sparks, C. (Eds.) *Journalism and Popular Culture*. London: SAGE.
- Gans, H.J. (1980) *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time*. New York: Vintage/Random House
- Gauntlett, D. and Hill, A. (1999) *TV Living: Television, Culture and Everyday*
- Gauntlett, D. (2003) *About the Artlab Approach*. Bournemouth Media School. <http://www.artlab.org.uk/intro.htm> Accessed December 2003
- Graber, D.A. (2001) *Processing Politics; Learning from Television in the Internet Age*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Graber, D.A. (2003) The Rocky Road to New Paradigms: Modernizing News and Citizenship Standards. *Political Communication*, 20(2), pp.145-148.
- Groenhuijsen, C. and van Liempt, A. (1995) *Live! Macht, Missers en Meningen van de Nieuwsmakers op TV*. Den Haag: SDU uitgevers.
- de Haan, J., van den Broek, A., and Schnabel, P. (2001) *Het Nieuwe Consumenten: Een Vooruitblik Vanuit Demografie en Individualisering*.
- Den Haag: SCP Werkdocument 72 de Haan, J. and Huysmans, F. (2002). *E-cultuur: Een Empirische Verkenning*. Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau.
- Hargreaves, I. and Thomas, J. (2002) *New News, Old News: an ITC and BSC Research Publication*, London: Broadcasting Standards Commission/ Independent Television Commission.
- Harrington, W. (1997) *Intimate Journalism: The Art and Craft of Reporting Everyday Life*, London: SAGE.
- Held, V. (1993) *Feminist Morality. Transforming Culture, Society and Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Jensen, K.B. (1986) *Making Sense of the News*, Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press
- Johnson, S. (2005) *Everything Bad is Good for You: Why Popular Culture is Making us Smarter*, London: Penguin Group.
- Katz, J. (1993) The Media's War on Kids. *Rolling Stone*. November 25, vol. 47, p.130.
- Lewis, J., Cushion, S. and Thomas, J. (2005) Immediacy, Convenience or Engagement? An Analysis of 24-hour News Channels in the UK. *Journalism Studies*, 6(4), pp.461-477
- Livingstone, S. (2002) *Young People and New Media*. London: Sage. Lyman, P. and Varian, H.R. (2000) How Much Information? <http://www.sims.berkeley.edu/how-much-info> Accessed October 20, 2005
- Mindich, D.T.Z. (2005) *Tuned Out. Why Americans Under 40 Don't Follow the News*. New York: Oxford University Press
- de Mul, J. (1995) De Draadloze Verbeelding: Een Virtuele Blik in de Toekomst van de Beeldende Kunsten. In Zijdeveld, A.C. (Ed.) *Kleine Geschiedenis van de Toekomst: 100 Thesen Over de Westerse Samenleving op Weg Naar de Eenentwintigste Eeuw*. Kok, Netherlands: Kampen
- Nijs, D. and Peters, F. (2002) *Imagineering*. Amsterdam: Boom Ofcom (2004) *Review of Public Service Television Broadcasting*. UK: www.ofcom.org.uk
- Piët, S. (2003) *De Emotiemarkt: De Toekomst van de Beleviseconomie*. Amsterdam: Pearson Education Benelux BV
- Pine, B.J., and Gilmore, J.H. (1999) *The Experience Economy: Work is Theatre & Every Business a Atage*, Boston: Harvard Business School Press
- Putnam, R.D. (1995) *Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America*. Paper presented at American Political Science Association annual conference.
- Putnam, R.D. (2000) *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster
- Raeymakers, K. (2003) De Kloof Tussen Jongeren en Nieuws: Een Onderzoek naar de Manier Waarop Vlaamse 16- tot 18-jarigen Omgaan met Kranten. In Biltereyst, D. and Peeren, Y. (Eds.) *Nieuws, Democratie & Burgerschap: Onderzoek over Hedendaagse Nieuwsmedia*. Gent, Belgium: Academia Press.
- Scannel, P. (2005) The Meaning of Broadcasting in the Digital Era. In Lowe, G.F. and Jauert, P. (Eds.) *Cultural Dilemmas in Public Service Broadcasting*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- Schudson, M. (1999) *The Good Citizen: A History of American Civic Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
- Sconce, J. (2004) What If? Charting Television's New Boundaries. In Spiegel, L. and Olsson, J. (Eds.) *Television After TV Essays on a Medium in Transition*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Shohat, E. and Stam, R. (1994) *Untinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*. London: Routledge.
- SKO (2004) Kijkcijfers [WWW-document] URL: <http://www.kijkonderzoek.nl> Accessed January 2004
- Yin, R.K. (1984). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Thousands Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Zaller, J. (2003) A New Standard of News Quality: Burglar Alarms for the Monitorial Citizen. *Political Communication*, 20(2), pp.109-130.

Satire as Cross-Media Entertainment for Public Service Media

Hanne Bruun

Like other European public service broadcasters, Danish public service television has a strong tradition of entertainment with an edge: satire. Currently programmes within this tradition play an important and successful role in the growing competition for viewers, especially for young audiences. This development has brought important innovations and experimentation involving the Internet within this entertainment genre. The genre is in many ways thriving in public service television and adds diversity to an entertainment profile otherwise dominated by quiz, game and talk show formats (Bruun, 2005).

As a point of departure this chapter will discuss the characteristics of satire as a communicative mode, and its dependency on the contextual knowledge forms of the audience. These are conceptualized as the 1) *media-cultural* and the 2) *socio-political* forms of knowledge. On a general level they are the bedrock of the entertaining qualities in the genre and the platform facilitating reflections on political, social, and cultural themes and issues. By analysing examples from one innovative and successful satirical series this chapter demonstrates how these two forms of knowledge are in sophisticated ways presumed and created in a cross-media format. This chapter argues that focussing on genre is a fruitful way for public service institutions to conceptualise the transition from public service broadcasting [PSB] to public service media [PSM] in the digital, multiplatform future.

Satire, parody, and two knowledge forms

In the different theoretical points of view on the phenomenon, satire seems understood as a particular genre and as a style creating a particular communicative mode (Agger, 2005; Schwind, 1988; Hutcheon, 1985). In Danish public service television this two-sidedness is important. Television satire is a category of programmes typically designed for the weekend schedule and regarded as part of the PSB entertainment profile. Further, specific stylistic and aesthetic features, as well as historical developments, are linked to the category. Put dif-

ferently, the features and developments link such programmes as a category. Broadcasters and producers, as well as television viewers, have genre-based expectations for television satire. An important dimension is its contextual dependency. To carry out its satirical intention, satire must have a strong reference to social, political, and cultural reality outside the discursive universe of the text in its self. If the satirical intention of the text is to be understood and perhaps applauded by viewers, then *viewers and broadcasters must share larger parts* of the contextualising social, political, and cultural reality. Drawing on Jakobson, Schwind (1988) argues that the referential function of language is essential in satire, even if we are dealing with fiction.

Because of its contextual dependency, satire first presupposes socio-political knowledge. This can be either the viewer's key to opening up a congenial community or the key to locking out the viewer. So satire can either include or exclude individuals and groups. Laughter is often the most obvious sign of inclusion; joining the laughter indicates common feeling. In this way satire can strengthen a feeling of togetherness among people more or less intuitively via understanding the satirical intention and references. By operating on a basis of presupposed socio-political knowledge and common feeling, satire is able to segment the audience. By the same token it can create media phenomena which can become a cult phenomenon among certain audiences.

The ridicule created by satire can be regarded as a social act with consequences; this social dimension defines satire. The ridicule contains some critique of the present state of things and an intention to change reality in satire. It has a moral sting and normative perspective, but not necessarily of a politically progressive nature. Thus, satire can easily have a conservative or a regressive aim. To define satire's intention of changing the present state of things, Leif Ove Larsen (2001) distinguished between two satirical modes: egalitarian and elitist satire.

Egalitarian satire has its sting aimed at the political, the economic, and the cultural powers in a society. Egalitarian satire attacks inequalities, and the injustices created by inequalities. The mockery produced by egalitarian satire is directed at the establishment and is supposed to join (and join with) the powerless, offering laughter as their weapon. To elaborate on the functions of egalitarian satire, it presumes that viewers are able to identify with the powerless in a given satirical treatment of a case, and gain self-affirmation by doing so. *Elitist satire*, in contrast, has its sting directed towards those criticising the establishment or status quo. Here the target groups are everyday citizens, and sometimes minorities or weak social groups in society. Again, to elaborate on the functions of elitist satire it can be said to facilitate self-criticism as well as self-affirmation by *not* identifying with the target groups. Both satirical modes involve an appeal to the viewer's experience of his or her social status and psychological place in the hierarchy of society via these inclusion-exclusion dynamics. This socio-psychological aspect can be examined further by introducing Dolf Zillmann's theory of "disposition".

Zillmann defined socio-psychological functions of comedy. By using Festinger's social-comparison theory, especially the so-called "downward compari-

sons", Zillmann suggested that the audience appeal of comedy is in placing the audience in a position of "moral monitor" (Zillmann, 2000: 38). From this position the audience is able to judge and even condemn the behaviour and intentions of characters. Two elements account for the production of laughter instead of compassion or contempt: first, combining the humour cues of the text with the comic frame of mind of the audience (ibid: 45); second, combining the negative attitude of the audience towards a character with the character as the victim of humiliation, insults, and defeat. The negative attitude is created because the character is breaking social norms of good behaviour. For example, the character could be extremely arrogant, snobbish, vain and pompous, or very stupid, egocentric, hypocritical and vulgar. According to Zillmann, the reactions of the audience are not only consequences of feeling superiority to the character but also framed by the fact that the comic narration punishes the deviant behaviour. This enables the audience to be "malicious with dignity" (Zillmann, 2000: 49).

In order to fully understand the characteristics of satire, these socio-psychological functions of comedy need be combined with the contextual dependency of satire and its presumption of socio-political knowledge mentioned earlier, as well as the referential status of the satirical texts. This means the moral sting and the normative perspective in both egalitarian and elitist satire *explicitly* thematise and facilitate value discussions compared to the more implicit textual strategy of comedy. This also gives satire a special genre status located somewhere between the factual genres and fiction. Another reason for this tricky genre status is due to television satire's dependency on parody.

In order to mock and make the viewers laugh, satire incorporates established discursive practices. In a discussion of the difficult distinction between satire and parody, Linda Hutcheon argued that parody is always directed at another text or coded discourse (Hutcheon, 1985: 16). It repeats a coded discourse but with a distance created by means of irony, exaggeration and distortion. Parody can thereby be used in comprehensive ways: to create a playful and kind celebration of the original, or to create a mocking and spiteful commentary. Pastiche borders on parody. In television satire, parody and pastiche are often the aesthetic engines. These three speech acts are very difficult to separate. But pastiche does not necessarily imply an evaluation of its referent (Dyer, 2007: 23-24), whereas parody does. And parody is not necessarily satirical. An example of this can be taken from a Danish entertainer team, *Linje 3*, renowned for parodies of the Danish Queen. One of the male entertainers dressed up like the Queen and his diction, as well as choice of words, presented a loyal and humorous exaggeration of Queen Margrethe II, but with no intention of changing the Queen.

Television satire can probably not do without parody and pastiche, but whether the aesthetic engine is pastiche or parody, and whether a parody has the moral sting and the normative perspective of satire, seems an analytical task. Nonetheless, in analysing the relationship between especially parody and satire in specific texts, two issues are important, together pointing to the

limitations of textual analysis as the only methodological approach.

First, the contextual dependence of satire and its dependence on the knowledge of the audience are important to the relationship between parody and satire. For example, if constitutional monarchy were a controversial political question in Denmark the audience would likely regard the parody of the Queen by *Linje 3* as malicious in tone, with a satirical intention of ridiculing and criticising the constitutional monarchy in Denmark. Second, as mentioned above, the theoretical literature on satire emphasises the referential language function in satire despite the fictional status of the text. But the *specific kind* of referential function of language involved in satire is not examined very thoroughly.

The question is, therefore, whether the theoretical definition of satire, and consequently the distinction between satire and parody, assumes reference to *specific* and *identifiable* social, political or cultural issues, or instead to specific people or television programmes on the current political agenda? In satire the characters in a text can be fictional but must the different issues they are talking about be part of a reality outside the textual universe and shared by the audience? Or, instead, must the characters in satirical text be parodies of existing human beings or programmes known by the audience while the settings or the characters can be fictional? The question, then, is if satire or only parody is possible in the absence of specific references? Across these theoretical questions, one thing seems to be obvious: To understand the dynamic generic relationship between satire and parody the genre expectations of the audience, as well as the producers, must be taken into account. Like other genres, satire is best understood as a *dynamic horizon of expectations* and a kind of *contractual relationship*, and, hence, what is produced and understood as satire changes over time (Neale, 1980).

Nonetheless, in Danish television satire, parody is a very important lever in present developments of the genre. Parodies of specific television programmes, and media genres and features, play an important role. In performing parodies the satire is often directed at these media genres or features as well as at political and social issues. To sum up, two contextual knowledge forms are presupposed in television satire: socio-political knowledge and media-cultural knowledge. By using the forms of knowledge, they are also created. The relationship is reflexive. Satirical programmes add to the media aesthetics knowledge of its audience as well as adding to their socio-political knowledge, perhaps facilitating value discussions, and political, cultural, and possibly even self-reflective processes. The knowledge dimension of entertainment is obvious in television satire and will be discussed in more detail later using examples from the DR2-series, *The Boys from Angora*.

Genre development – a short outline

Television satire started as an entertainment genre in Danish public service television in 1968.¹ The inspiration came mainly from an already established

tradition of radio satire in DR, from the BBC-series *That Was The Week That Was*, and last but not least from the shows at political revue theatres in the 1960s. From the beginning these programmes were characterised by blending two satirical modes in sketches – egalitarian and elitist. This blending meant the sketches and the programmes as a whole contained a double-edged sting. On the one hand they had a self-ironic tone that commented on political and national-cultural issues and lifestyles, offering the viewers self-critical perspectives on the Danes while simultaneously providing self-affirmation. On the other hand, the programmes critiqued the establishment, giving viewers the opportunity to identify with the powerless in a given satirical treatment of an issue, and again also gaining self-affirmation by doing so. This satirical style put a damper on political confrontations in the programmes: They were not neutral, but the critique was not one-sided and was often directed at the lifestyles and self-delusions of ordinary Danes. The double-edged sting became a part of the satirical tradition in Danish television and can still be found in the present uses of the genre.

On the one hand satire could be criticised for being anything but dangerous while on the other hand it could be seen as disturbing because no political viewpoints and no groups in society are safe from satirical treatment. From this perspective, the blending of egalitarian and elitist satirical modes emphasises critical political and social self-reflection rather than political mobilisation in particular directions. Often the programmes were and still are popular among television viewers. During the monopoly from 1951 to 1988 they satisfied the public service broadcaster's need for popular entertainment with a political legitimacy in the eyes of cultural elite both inside and outside the institution.

By the end of the 1990s two important developments took place within the genre. First, the genre broke free of the theatrical tradition inherited from political revue theatre and started to use the genres of television as its setting. Satire was cast in the formats of news and current affairs discussion shows. This development made the generic link between the situation comedy and the satirical programmes clearly visible. Second, the genre developed into two different branches. The first branch could be called *political satire*, which continued to reflect the current news flow of the media and was oriented towards specific political issues, social problems, and/or people on the national agenda; all things considered, issues traditionally addressed by the daily news flow. The second branch developed as *social satire*, which cultivated an interest in the life of ordinary Danes. The focus of social satire was on different lifestyles and mentalities, and the way cultural and political trends and new social demands affected the individual in terms of behaviour, norms, and self-image. In particular, the gap between the demands and the actual abilities of the individual was exposed; the programmes cultivated loss of face as the comic engine. In this manner social satire broadened the reach of areas that could be the objects of television satire and was no longer restricted to current political issues.

At the moment social satire is the dominant satirical form on Danish public service television. Compared to the use of the genre from the late 1960s until

the late 1990s, more emphasis has been given to the audiences' knowledge of different lifestyles and mentalities, as well as their media-cultural knowledge. In short, social satire benefited enormously from the growing interest in everyday life and the private sphere, evinced by public service television.

Social satire becomes cross-media formats

The combinations or blendings of the socio-political knowledge of lifestyles and mentalities with media-cultural knowledge made the programmes into small cultural prisms. For viewers who did not have the necessary kinds of presupposed knowledge, these prisms were difficult to understand. Because of the demands for contextual knowledge by the audience, the programmes became perfect for integrating viewers in fan-like relationships. At the same time and in correlated fashion, these demands made the programmes perfect for segmenting audiences.

As an example of social satire produced for TV 2's main channel, "The Kingdom" (*Kongeriget*, 1999, 1998, and 2002) series stands out. The series was performed by, and also partly written by, two female comedians. Each episode focussed on a specific theme, for example the package tour, pets, the music festival, the football match. With the theme as a framework, the episodes consisted of portraits of Danes from different social groups, age groups, and regions in Denmark. The viewers witnessed how these different characters performed on the package tour or at the music festival. In the series, losing face and the displayed gap between the on-stage and back-stage behaviour of the characters was central to the satirical sting directed at them. In this way, the ridicule in social satire put forward a type of moral critique of the way life was lived, and of the norms and values characterising the ordinary Danes portrayed.

The style was continued with more malice in series such as *The Boys from Angora* (DR2, 2004, and still accessible on dr.dk/satire). The series was broadcast on Friday nights from 21.00 to 21.30. During its two seasons the ratings grew from 2.7% to 7.4%. The series had strong appeal for young adults with a target affinity of 209% in the age group 21-30, and built a well-developed and much used website. At the website it was possible to view already broadcast episodes and find material with satirical content produced directly for the website. *The Boys from Angora* rapidly developed into a cross-media phenomenon with a specific satirical universe; it became much more than a television programme.

To a large extent, the reason was the way the website supported, maintained, and enhanced the interest of the audience created by the television programmes.² This indicates a cross-media criterion for success. The television part of *The Boys from Angora* was a parody of a variety show programme set in a hotel room with sketches. The host of the show was a young man with a couple of very peculiar male co-hosts. The intention of the show was to be entertaining with everything ending in disaster because of the shortcomings

of the co-hosts and the conflicts between them, and because of the host's inability to control the co-hosts.

The male host set the stage for the sketches in the programme. These sketches consisted of new episodes of serial features with returning characters and universes. One of the very popular sketches was a satire about the wanna-be-professional bicycle team (Team Easy On) cast in the format of a docu-soap. The team tried against all odds to participate in the *Tour de France*, but, in the first place, the two team-members and their team coach had absolutely no talent and, in the second, none of them was able to see the enormous gap between their own abilities and what was in fact necessary to succeed. The satirical docu-soap-pastiche had lots of allusions to the former Danish Tour de France winner, Bjarne Riis, who is now the Director of the professional bicycle team CSC. Riis in fact appeared in the series, and he was of course the idol of Team Easy On. This intersection between the fictional and factual linked the satire to its referent and was used long after the show had stopped: When Riis in May 2007 at a press conference admitted that he was doped when he won the Tour, Team Easy On also confessed a few days later. The satire was cast in the format of a press conference and broadcast on YouTube (still accessible). DR covered the conference in fake news stories on radio and television interviewing the commissioning editor of DR2 about the future of the co-operation with the people behind *The Boys from Angora*.

The people behind *The Boys from Angora* were three young men who wrote the material and played all the characters in the series. One of the returning characters, Lars Allan Baunsbøl with the nickname Baune, was, among other things, the host of a television agony column. He also starred as the expert in the show, answering all the questions allegedly put to the programme by viewers. The sketch illustrates the characteristics of current social satire with regard to the relationship between egalitarian and elitist modes as well as the use of the knowledge forms:

Baune is a rather ugly young man in his early twenties. He is dressed a little out of fashion and has a hip-hop influenced haircut that is styled with a lot of wax. He is further blessed with an overbite and braces. Baune is not very bright, but unfortunately he is not at all aware of his own limitations. He comes from Jutland in the western part of Denmark. He does not speak dialect but has the inflection associated with the mid-western part of Jutland. People from this part of Denmark are often mocked for being rednecks and Baune certainly confirms the prejudices. Baune has a strong need for presenting himself as a very masculine individual of high social status in complete control of his life. But in every episode he loses face in front of the camera and cuts a sorry figure, revealing the gap between his abilities and the demands put to him by life and by the agony column.

In the episode originally broadcast on 05.03.2004 the question put to him by a viewer regards how to attend a football match. Baune has some difficulties reading the letter aloud and his lack of proficiency in reading is demonstrated. When he finally understands the question he answers with laughter

and enthusiasm, throwing himself into a chronologically organised narration of the phenomenon, with himself as the protagonist. In the narrative, he tries to present himself as an individual who masters the norms of masculinity and behaviour associated with being part of a group of supporters. As an example, these norms involve being able to master aggressive playfulness and have fun even while drunk.

Unfortunately, Baune gets carried away by his own narrative; he loses control and tells a defamatory story. In Baune's universe attending a football match involves getting too drunk and getting into a fight. Instead of having a night out with his mates after the match, Baune goes home, drinks coffee and watches football on commercial television with his mother. While telling the story, Baune loses his high spirits and enthusiasm. He lowers his voice, looks away from the camera and ducks. At this moment of total loss of face suffered by the host and expert of the show the episode of the agony column ends.

To understand the satirical sting in the agony column, complex and detailed socio-political knowledge is presupposed. The audience must be familiar with certain lifestyles and social classes, norms, and specific cultural codes, and prejudices in Danish society. It seems fair to claim that perhaps knowledge is even added to what is provided. By using this knowledge, Baune becomes the object of ridicule: He is presented as a loser and his self-delusions are exposed. At first glance the satirical sting is elitist and linked to the so-called downward comparisons introduced earlier, placing the audience as the "moral monitor" (Zillmann, 2000: 44). From this position the audience is able to judge and condemn the behaviour and intentions of the characters. But this rather misanthropic position could be the Achilles heel of social satire due to the egalitarian genre expectations of the audience, as well as the producers, established by the genre tradition. Two things are done to avoid a clear-cut elitist mode.

First, the discomfort of witnessing loss of face suffered by other human beings is used to bring a tragic dimension into the portrait of Baune. His emotional shift from enthusiasm to shame and confusion shows how vulnerable he in fact is, and feeling pity for him is an option. Again, complex socio-political knowledge is presupposed in the feature. The audience is familiar with the problems in life that could be facing naïve and underprivileged members of society like Baune. In this process, the viewer might even recognise his or her own shortcomings in life. Second, his vulnerability is underpinned by the egalitarian mode in the agony column-feature. The feature is in fact a parody of the television agony column as a sign of trash and low-budget television: The host is a terrible amateur rather than a trustworthy expert on life. The example shows that he will never be able to give the viewers useful advice on anything important. Accordingly, the feature has a satirical sting pointed at the media, and especially television, for taking advantage of young people wanting to attain the high status associated with being stars. They are made fools of, and so are the viewers who contact television for credible help in life. Seen from this point of view, both Baune and the viewers are victims of a cynical media.

The satirical sting directed at the media presupposes media-cultural knowledge of the conventions of a television genre, as well as the expectations the hosts and the experts in this genre must meet. It also presumes knowledge about the status television has in society and the sometimes dubious ethical and qualitative standards of its programming. The presupposed media-cultural knowledge in the series did not just involve the series broadcast on television. The website added to the satirical sting directed at the media. As an example, the website had a link to the (fake) sponsor behind Team Easy On. The sponsor (Easy On) produced condoms and the hyperlink was to the advertising agency that designed the homepage. But the link either did not work or worked very badly. The features depended heavily on the user's media-cultural knowledge of how often links actually do not work, mocking the whole idea of sponsoring in the media. Furthermore, it added to the atmosphere of enormous distance between ambitions and abilities surrounding Team Easy On and the Angora-universe as a whole.

The website was an integrated part of what gradually became a satirical cross-media format, and the satire continued on the web in different ways. An example was the alleged sale of a video featuring a piano player performing as the co-host in the television part of the series: Henrik Solgaard. The video was supposed to be on sale at carefully selected petrol stations in Northern Jutland. The piano player had no talent at all, but like all other characters in the show he had no sense of his own shortcomings. The (fake) website-information added to the staging of the character in the show. Again, the satire in *The Boys from Angora* depended on the media-cultural knowledge of the audience. The audience had to be familiar with the way in which websites are used as the commercial back-up to television, selling different products as well as branding the media company.³ The audience also had to be aware of the specifics of the kind of music normally sold at petrol stations in Denmark, especially in Northern Jutland. Furthermore, the audience had to hold a socio-political knowledge of the quality assessment of this kind of popular music in order to get the satirical sting.

Genre as a tool in the production of public service media entertainment

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the perhaps provocative ambiguity of the satirical sting in Danish satire, due to the blend of elitist and egalitarian modes, could facilitate political-cultural self-reflection. As pointed out by Yngvar Kjus (2005), this probably does not lead to either major change in society or in the media genres subject to satire or parody. In his analysis of humorous television series on NRK he suggested that satirical-parody programmes have a mental-recreational function for the audience. Using Bakhtin's theoretical view on the carnival, Kjus argued that the programmes are probably neither conservative nor subversive of social norms, conventions, or power structures.

The overall intention of these programmes is to produce either playful laughter or critique through ridicule. In both cases the function of laughter is essential: to create a sort of *breathing space* for the audience where it is possible to experience a reflective distance from specific social phenomena or the media forms that guide us (Kjus, 2005: 230-231).

Nonetheless, one could add, this reflective distance created by the laughter is deeply dependent on the audience's mastery of different forms of knowledge operating in the programmes. The genre development and the characteristics of cross-media used in social satire also underpin a growing complexity of knowledge involved in such programmes. In this way, satire still represents a very special entertainment genre on public service television.

The genre represents a strong entertainment tradition that can be seen in other north western European countries, including Great Britain, Norway and Sweden. The genre has managed to creatively renew itself and to use the aesthetic characteristics and communicative potentials of television and new media in this process. Presently the genre is in many ways given priority by these public service institutions, possibly because it is still understood by the institutions as central to the entertainment dimension of the public service remit. In Danish public service institutions there seems to be room for radical experiments and errors in this genre, in contrast with the demands put to other entertainment genres like game, quiz and talk shows. A reason for this privilege is undoubtedly that the genre fits very well with the idea that public service entertainment should be different from entertainment on commercial channels, and with the multi-dimensional mission of public service institutions in a new media age. From this point of view, satire is still a politically important entertainment genre for public service institutions because it is easy to argue its importance even if the formats have no mass appeal or turn out to be failures. And as mentioned, satirical cross-media formats are crucial because they have in fact managed to attract the politically and economically important younger audience segments in Denmark by building fan-like relationships between the formats and the audiences.

A perhaps important reason for this success, and a possible lesson to be learned from the generic development of this entertainment genre, is that the communicative intention of the genre seems to guide developments from television broadcasting to the production of cross-media formats. As described in the beginning of this chapter, the communicative intention of satire is to entertain the audience by mocking and ridiculing the present state of affairs in egalitarian and/or elitist modes, depending heavily on the two knowledge forms. The intention connects producers and audiences through relevant media platforms. In fact, the communicative intention central to this genre as illustrated in *The Boys from Angora* case is structuring the use of the Internet site and not the other way around. In order to reach the audience by integrating new media in the satirical intention, new media *must* be used. It is simply not possible to make a satire presuming and creating a media-cultural knowledge of the Internet without a parody of the medium as a vital component.

The communicative intentionality of genres is in this way paramount to media platforms. In this sense genre might be a fruitful way of conceptualising the transition from public service broadcasting to public service media. In fact, that is what already seems to guide the way different entertainment genres make use of new media. In quiz, game and talk shows the fundamental and important qualities of live-ness, playfulness and sociability are empowered through the use of e-mail, SMS and mobile phones. In news and current affairs the fundamental intention of informing the citizens is empowered by the use of Internet sites and perhaps up dates via mobile phones. To use genre as a way of conceptualising the transition would also be a powerful argument against political forces trying to limit the public service obligations to traditional radio and television broadcasting and 'old media' in an everyday context where audiences use multiple and varied media for different purposes.

However the scenarios of the marginalised public service institutions in content production have perhaps only a rhetorical role to play – as scare stories. As Aslama & Syvertsen (2006) have shown, in the future scenario in Europe it is more likely that public service institutions will retain a dominant position despite wide variations among European countries due to national differences, resources and traditions. In the Nordic countries and the UK, public service broadcasters have been in the forefront of digital development. In a very small media market such as Denmark, the transition from public service broadcasting to public service media is strongly supported by the political ambitions of the media agreement for 2007-2010. These ambitions are again repeated and elaborated in detail in the charter for DR (2007-2010) and in the broadcasting permission for TV 2 (2003-2010). The public service obligations include all platforms and the institutions must develop and implement new services for the planned digital terrestrial television net in Denmark in close connection to the already established activities of these institutions. The political plan is to switch-off the analogue signal in 2009. The two public service institutions are given a major as well as privileged role to play in this plan involving the persuasion of the public to invest in a digital future. To prevent the public service institutions from developing content on new platforms across genres involved in fulfilling remit obligations would therefore be devastating to the political goals at both a national and an EU-level.

Notes

1. The main features of the historical developments in Danish television satire in this section are based on Bruun, H. (2006) *Politisk og Social Selvreflection i Dansk TV-satire* (Political and social self-reflection in Danish TV Satire). Available at: CFJE Knowledge Base, www.cfje.dk/cfje/vidbase.nsf/
2. Adding to the media attention of the series and its growing number of viewers and users was the fact that one of the actors, Simon Kvamm, had several smash hits with his band, *Nepbew*, during this period.
3. The development of the website for the series evolved as the series grew more and more popular during its second season. There was no actual 'master plan' from the beginning. But

the producer and editor of the website worked together closely when trying out different ideas. The stories taking place on the website did not affect the televised series, so television was still the main platform. The source for this information is the editor at DR-Ung, Rasmus Ladefoged, who was the webmaster and web-editor during the production of *The Boys from Angora*.

References

- Agger, G. (2005) *Dansk TV-drama: Arvesølv og Underholdning*. Frederiksberg, Denmark: Forlaget Samfundslitteratur.
- Aslama, M. and Syvertsen, T. (2006) Policies of Reduction or Renewal? European Public Service Broadcasting in the New Media Era. In Carlsson, U. (ed.) *Radio, TV & Internet in the Nordic Countries. Meeting the Challenges of New Media Technology*. Göteborg: Nordicom
- Bakhtin, M. (1965/2001) *Karneval og Latterkultur*. Frederiksberg, Denmark: Det Lille Forlag.
- Berger, A.A. (1996) The Politics of Laughter. In Patton, G., Powell, C., and Wagg, S. (eds.), *The Social Faces of Humour*. Aldershot, UK: Arena.
- Bruun, H. (2006) *Politisk og Social Selvrefleksion i Dansk TV-satire*. Retrieved from <http://www.cfje.dk/vidbase.nsf>.
- Bruun, H. (2005) Public Service and Entertainment. In Lowe, G.F. and Jauert, P. (eds.) *Cultural Dilemmas in Public Service Broadcasting*. Göteborg: Nordicom
- Bruun, H. (2006) Tv-underholdning. In Hjarvard, s. (ed.), *Dansk TV-historie 1951-2005*. Frederiksberg, Denmark: Forlaget Samfundslitteratur.
- Crisell, A. (1991) Filth, Seduction and Blasphemy: The Rise and Fall of Satire. In Corner, J. (ed.), *Popular Television in Britain*. London: BFI Publishing.
- DR Årbog 1967-68 + 1968-69.
- Dyer, R. (2007) *Pastiche*. London: Routledge.
- Gallups TV-meter database 1992. Accessed on 16 October 2006.
- Hutcheon, L. (1985) *A Theory of Parody*. London: Routledge.
- Hutcheon, L. (1994) *Irony's Edge*. London: Routledge.
- Kjus, Y. (2005) Kanevalets Formspråk I Humor-TV. In *Norsk Medietidsskrift*, 3.
- Kjus, Y. and Hertzberg K.B. (2006). *Humor i Medierne*. Oslo: J. W. Cappelens Forlag.
- Ladefoged, R., editor at DR youth programming. Interviewed by the author on 13 September 2006.
- Larsen, L.O. (2001) Respektløs Moro? Satire og Parodi i 1960-årenes TV-komedie. in *Norsk Medietidsskrift*, 1.
- Mediepolitisk aftale for 2007-2010*. 6 June 2006, Dansk Kulturministeriet.
- Neal, S. (1980) *Genre*. London: British Film Institute.
- Palmer, J. (1994) *Taking Humour Seriously*. London: Routledge.
- Public service-kontrakt mellem DR og kulturministeren for perioden 1.1. 2007 – 31.12. 2010*, Dansk Kulturministeriet
- Schwind, K. (1988) *Satire in Funktionalen Kontexten*. Tübingen, Germany: Gunter Narr Verlag.
- Strinati, D. and Wagg, S. (1992) *Come on Down: Popular Media Culture in Post-War Britain*. London: Routledge.
- Tilladelse til TV 2/Danmark A/S til at udøve public service-programvirksomhed 17.12. 2003*, Kulturministeriet
- Wagg, S. (1992) You've Never had it So Silly: The Politics of British Satirical Comedy from *Beyond the Fringe* to *Spitting Image*. In Strinati, D. and Wagg, s. (eds.) *Come on Down: Popular Media Culture in Post-War Britain*. London: Routledge.
- Wagg, S. (1998) *Because I tell a Joke or Two: Comedy, Politics and Social Difference*. London: Routledge.
- Zillmann, D. and Vorderer, P. (2000) *Media Entertainment: The Psychology of Its Appeal*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Zillmann, D. (2000) Humor and Comedy. In Zillmann, D. and Vorderer, P. (eds.) *Media Entertainment: The Psychology of its Appeal*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Education in the Transition to Public Service Media

Mirko Lukács

Together with information and culture, education has been one of the three Enlightenment pillars of the public service broadcasting [PSB] mission in Western Europe (Jauert & Lowe, 2005). One can even argue that ‘education’ has been a cornerstone of ‘media policy’ since mankind discovered the power of images, symbols and writing as means of communication. In this sense the position of education in the history of mass communications can be regarded as quintessential. But with the rise of commercial broadcasters and dual broadcasting systems in Europe since the 1980s the seemingly inviolable position of education has been increasingly questioned together with the broader PSB remit as long defined within a social context of Enlightenment ideals. By focusing on education as a typical example of the development and challenges of the traditional PSB remit over time, this chapter addresses fundamental questions of significance to the transition from PSB to public service media [PSM].

A short history of education in public service broadcasting

From the beginning of radio and television broadcasting in the early 20th century education has been a primary objective of public service broadcasting in Western Europe. This was driven by the historic Enlightenment mission that also inspired the establishment of adult education centres across Europe, such as the University Extension Movement in England at the end of the 19th century and the “Volksuniversiteit” in The Netherlands at the beginning of the 20th century. In every case the objective was to reduce educational inequalities between various groups in society by giving everyone fair opportunity to learn and develop.

In many European countries radio broadcasting was started as a private initiative. But already in the second half of the 1920s radio broadcasting was licensed and regulated by the state (McQuail & Sume, 1986: 2). From its inception PSB has been mandated with a cultural and educational mission with nation building and common culture as key drivers. This was strongly inspired by the ideal

of PSB serving an Enlightenment mission (Jauert & Lowe, 2005:13-16). In the 1920s and 1930s national public radio organisations across Europe began radio broadcasting language courses and lectures from universities. After the Second World War the urge for social and labour participation grew such that democratic and *Bildung* values were even more emphasised in the PSB mission.

The advent of television in the 1950s was the breakthrough of another mass medium with a strong societal impact that increasingly helped people share experiences. This use of broadcasting in education stimulated dreams of greater social equality as well as increased participation in societal processes and practices. In addition, school television was launched in many countries including the Netherlands, specifically targeting primary and secondary schools. Thus, most public service broadcasters in Western Europe provided a mixture of entertainment, information, culture and education to large audiences.

Since the 1950s specialised organisations have been established in various countries to better meet the unique quality and didactic requirements for public service educational broadcasting. Such include Telekolleg in Germany (Bavaria), Utbildungsradiön [UR] in Sweden, and Teleac and NOT in the Netherlands. More often, however, educational programmes were and still are provided by specialised departments within broader public broadcasting organisations, such as BBC Learning (formerly BBC Education) in the UK. In some cases one also finds dedicated national educational channels such as La Cinquième in France which is entrusted by law with specific objectives concerning education and learning.

In contrast with this historic importance, however, educational broadcasting became a much lower priority in several countries in the late 1980's and through the 1990's as a result of severe commercial competition and related company reorganisations keyed to cost-cutting measures. For example, the Danish Broadcasting Corporation [DR] closed down its educational department in 1989 because of changes in licence fee financing, and in Belgium the re-organisation of the Flemish public broadcaster, BRTN, into a private company under public law (thereafter VRT) resulted in far less educational programming than before. The educational remit of national public service broadcasters has been under attack as commercial competition in dual systems compels public broadcasters to become more focussed on programme ratings. In 2007 the UK, Sweden and the Netherlands are among the countries that still most explicitly put education forward as a major function of PSB in media law and policy. The situation is far less certain in most other countries, as we shall consider in some detail. The decay of educational broadcasting is an ill-advised trend, and on the contrary (as we argue here) needs to be greatly strengthened in the era of PSM.

Recent changes affecting broadcasting and education

The rise of commercial broadcasting has strongly affected the entire plan and structure of public service broadcasting in Europe. It has in particular led to

audience fragmentation and a stronger focus among public service broadcasters on ratings and on the desires (rather than the needs) of audiences. But what do the ever faster changes in society and the media landscape specifically mean for educational broadcasting as a public service? The following can be identified as dominant trends related to the remit for public service educational broadcasting.

Societal trends

Demographic, technological, economic, scientific and political developments are accelerating from generation to generation and so become harder to grasp by politicians, educators and media policy-makers. The relationship between public service broadcasting and education spins in the midst of this turmoil, touching almost every area of society. Some broad observations are pertinent.

Knowledge society. Western countries increasingly shift from agricultural and industrial economies into service and knowledge intensive economies. Knowledge has become a central productive factor. Knowledge has also become a precondition for participation in society and a determinant of the quality of the public sphere (Thomass, 2003: 32). This society context requires citizens and employees with high levels of education, with continuous access to up-to-date knowledge, and with a willingness to continuously invest in their knowledge and skills; i.e. lifelong learning. This raises the bar for 'formal' educators such as schools and universities, as well as for all other organisations involved in education which certainly includes educational broadcasters.

Individualisation. Birth rates and the average size of households are dropping across Western Europe. Institutions including the church, political parties, ideological movements and labour unions are losing ground as stable meeting places for securing those social bonding functions necessary for healthy public life. The consumption patterns of former clearly identifiable groups in society increasingly blur and become ever more unpredictable. Differentiation in educational demand and supply is growing apace. This requires mass customisation of educational content, learning channels and arrangements, and must extend the scope of educational broadcasting to educational narrowcasting and personalised media services. Of course audience and user fragmentation not only occur in the educational context, but have implications for all public media services.

Multi-literacies. Our personal, public and working lives are changing in dramatic ways as a result of growing cultural and linguistic diversities (multi-cultural societies) and new communication technologies. These changes are transforming cultures and the ways people communicate. They also redefine the contents and substance of 'literacy'. Meaning is made in ways that are increasingly multimode with not only oral, written-linguistic or static-image models of meaning, but crucially and increasingly via audiovisual and spatial patterns of meaning construction (New London Group, 1996). This is also about younger generations growing up with mouse in hand and a computer screen as their window on the world. Youngsters manage information streams and redefine

meaning on their terms and in their cultural context, at school, at work and in computer games (Veen & Vrakking, 2006). This is likely to become a very influential trend at the intersection of public broadcasting and education. It re-emphasises the importance of audiovisual media for education and stimulates the exploration of new learning processes that give more space for (inter)active learning than traditional curricula and pedagogy could accommodate.

Trends in the media landscape

Media changes are intertwined with societal changes, as Marshall McLuhan (1964) implied with the often quoted phrase “The medium is the message”. Each new medium has a potentially profound impact on people’s behaviour, regardless of the content it carries. The rise of the PC, the Internet and the mobile phone are good illustrations of the impact media have on private life, working and communication patterns, and relations in recent years. Media technologies energise broad changes, even if not technologically determined.

Digitalization. Digitalization has been the basis for astonishing growth in information and communication technologies [ICT] which started to blend with media technology in the 1980s. Increasingly today all media technology is digital – from publishing and cinema, to radio, television and media player devices. Our era marks the end of bandwidth scarcity which has been a dominant historic factor legitimating public service broadcasting in media policy. Digital media give broadcasters more space and time to serve smaller target groups by narrowcasting in addition to the mass appeal general broadcasting services. Moreover, digitalization and the World Wide Web, in particular, greatly expand opportunities for producing, using and sharing content and for human (and human-machine) interaction. This includes forms such as MSN chatting, gaming, googling, music and film downloading, podcasting, vodcasting, photosharing (Flickr), videosharing (YouTube), digital thematic and interactive radio and TV channels, IPTV and on demand audio and video services, as well as specific educational applications such as e-learning, educational webportals, educational CD-ROMs, on-line audiovisual archives for schools and the popular user-generated on-line encyclopaedia Wikipedia. And we are only at the *beginning* of this explosion in digital media applications and content that will further change the ways we live, communicate and learn. Precisely how isn’t possible to predict as we are so near the beginning, but this development presents daunting challenges as well as opportunities for PSM.

Media consumption patterns. Non-linear media, especially the Internet, cause changes in media consumption patterns that are significant for broadcasting and for media consumption more generally. For many years print, radio and television enjoyed relatively stable shares in overall media consumption in Western Europe. Then in the 1990s print media, and in particular newspaper reading, experienced steep declines in media consumption while computer use rose sharply. Longitudinal research by the national social and cultural planning agency SCP in The Netherlands indicates that between 1985 and

2005 the leisure time spent on media and ICT by citizens age 12 and older has remained relatively constant (19 hours per week), but that the time spent on the computer (online and offline) increased from 0.1 hour in 1985 to 3.9 in 2005. It did so at the cost of print, radio, and television use. Over the past five years the shift towards time spent on the computer (in particular on the Internet) has been accelerating, most dramatically for youngsters (SCP, 2006). This is a typical pattern in other countries as well.

Thus, a fourth major and increasingly mass medium already occupies an important place in media consumption and has achieved that status in a relatively short period – since the mid 1990s. And it is still growing. The importance of this for educational broadcasters is that the Internet and other digital media open fresh opportunities to offer educational content in new and interactive ways, and to address groups and even individuals more selectively. In short, the potential for personalisation is much, much greater. But ‘open net’ television will still remain an essential platform for educational broadcasting in the foreseeable future because of its unmatched strength in reaching relatively large audiences across social strata, and because of the typically slower new media adoption rates in schools.

Media landscape. With new media technologies and shifting consumption patterns, new players constantly enter the market and existing players must strategically reposition themselves. This creates an unstable condition. Moreover, the media market is globalizing in terms of content production, audiences and companies. International media conglomerates own a large number of companies in mass media today (in television, radio, publishing, movies and the Internet) and are fast gaining ground in Western Europe. Some major conglomerates are Bertelsmann (including RTL), Lagardère Media, News Corporation (including Sky), Sony, Time Warner, Viacom and the Walt Disney Company. The media market is consolidating which means that smaller local players, including the ‘big’ national broadcasters, increasingly face disadvantages in economies of scale and audience reach. Further, media markets and players are converging in terms of technologies, media and content. For example telcos and print publishers are moving into television, music publishers into film and video, and ICT-companies into media production technology and distribution.

Most interesting is the evolving role of particular ICT and Internet players that become ‘media facilitators’ rather than ‘content producers’, in contrast with classic media companies. Examples include Apple with the on-line download store iTunes, Amazon.com with its on-line media web store and huge interactive catalogue, Google with its powerful search engine and related applications, and the non-profit Wikimedia Foundation which operates Wikipedia, the free user-generated web encyclopaedia. What these players have in common is providing media services on a ‘meta-content’ level and, in this way, serving millions of users with often very individualised and unique interests. These market players are thriving on the principle of “The Long Tail”, a term coined by Chris Anderson, chief editor of *Wired* magazine (Anderson, 2006). This principle relates to the typical high peak of consumption at one end and the ‘long tail’ at the other end

of statistical distributions, such as the search for specific book titles. The long tail (e.g. a large number of rare titles) can cumulatively outnumber the high peak (e.g. a small number of bestseller titles) and therefore generate more use, traffic or sales. This is relevant for players involved in educational content because educational questions and needs will typically show a large variety that also represent a “long tail”. Digital technology and the Internet make it possible to serve different needs and questions. This should be a useful principle for any organisation developing to meet educational needs via multimedia.

Enlightenment mission elements still valid today

What do the turbulent changes in society and technology, and media digitalization in particular, implicate for the educational remit in public service media? There is no simple answer. It is understandable that discussed changes are so complex as to be confounding to most in media organisations and media policy today. With regard to educational broadcasting one should look closely at the original motives and objectives for educational broadcasting as a public service to see how valid such remain in today’s world. Does the historic ‘Enlightenment’ mission of public service broadcasters still apply to modern societies – i.e. the idea of contributing to equal opportunities for everyone to develop and learn by using public service media? If the issue is about social and educational inequalities in society one can argue that although the situation in Western Europe has much improved since the 1920s (when PSB made its start), it has not progressed to a level that most citizens or governments consider satisfactory. So there certainly are ‘Enlightenment challenges’ related to education that modern societies face:

- The quality and methods of education are fiercely under debate in many European countries;
- How to reduce social and educational inequalities between native citizens and immigrants in our societies is a major challenge;
- Democratic citizenship and social cohesion are two essential pillars of Western societies that continuously court erosion if not nourished by public efforts including education and broadcasting;
- Bringing European national economies to a higher knowledge and innovation level turns out to be much harder than the E.U.’s Lisbon targets (agreed in 2000) suggested;
- Older generations are as concerned as ever about the strength of values and historic consciousness among younger generations;
- As the European Union expands, the comparative educational levels increasingly vary, which is problematic for democracy and welfare interests;

- Last but not least, something very basic such as illiteracy is still a major problem in many European countries.

So the ‘Enlightenment by public broadcasting’ equation still has ample justification to legitimate a political and public mission in PSM. Practice so far shows that most commercial broadcasters don’t find high quality educational programming a profitable activity. Where profitable it is only within the constraints of a specific theme or target group without taking structural educational needs or inequalities into consideration. Therefore education is one of the most vulnerable public service functions today and the trends mean it will weaken and even disappear if left to commercial broadcasters to handle.

But is educational PSM instrumental to learning and the public Enlightenment ideal? Here clear-cut research and evidence is scarce. For example, research about the impact that leisure-time television has on school learning varies but generally confirms the positive effects of educational children’s television (such as *Sesame Street*) and in-school television. As far as educational programming for adults is concerned, there is less research but hardly any dispute about positive effects. Here the question is mainly in how educational programmes are defined. What makes an educational programme different from any other programme? What is the rationale for investing PSB budgets into the making and buying of specialised educational programmes? A common interest today is in the idea that there’s something to learn from any serious radio or television programme. In many cases this can be true. But what sets educational programmes apart from main stream (informative) programmes? Two factors, in particular:

- The central objective to produce a programme with explicit educational value by applying proven formats and didactic structures that enable or stimulate the learning process in formal (schools) and/or informal (at home) settings.
- The fit in a broader educational programming policy guaranteeing a comprehensive and coherent portfolio of educational programmes that match educational needs of specific target groups (such as primary school pupils, the elderly or specific minorities)

If educational programming policy is reduced to some aspects of some variety of other programmes then the educational value will be mostly a random side-effect and no contribution to the fulfilment of those Enlightenment ideals that are fundamental to European identity and society.

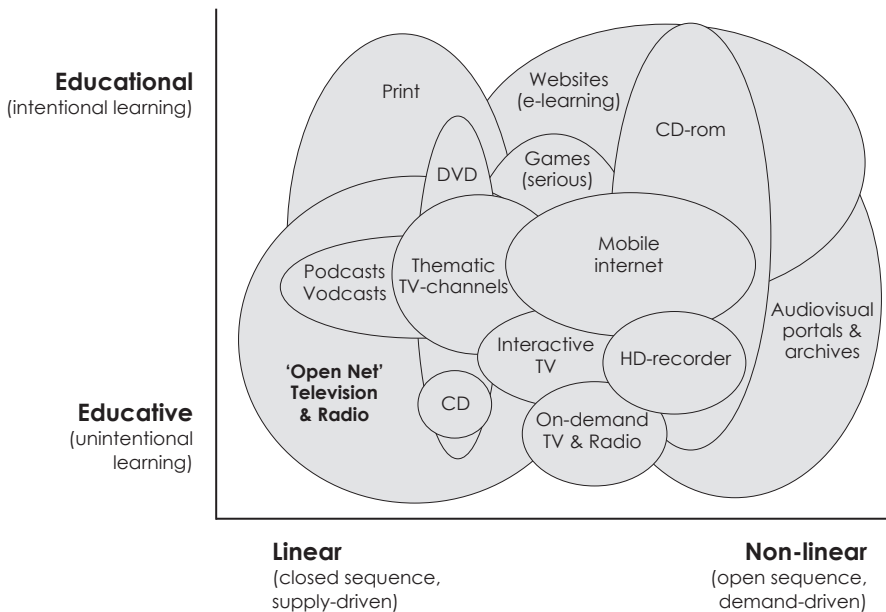
How new digital platforms can enable a PSM-model for education

There is an important observation to make about the concept of educational “broadcasting” in a digital world. The model and our understanding of broad-

casting is related to radio and television as mass media associated with relatively expensive production and relying on bandwidth capacity (and constraints) to reach large-scale audiences in a direct, linear way. Digitalization is radically changing this by opening production, distribution and the use of audiovisual media content to more organisations and also individuals, by greatly reducing costs, and by accordingly expanding opportunities. Media are more fundamentally interactive and this facilitates new media applications from exploiting ‘the long tail’, to e-learning, to user generated content and narrowcasting.

Figure 1 illustrates how the rise of new digital media has opened a wide range of opportunities to offer forms of ‘educative’ (unintentional) as well as ‘educational’ (intentional) learning in ‘linear’ and ‘non-linear’ ways via currently available media.

Figure 1. Multimedia means for education in a digital world



This figure illustrates:

- The traditional dominant platforms for educational broadcasting – i.e. ‘open net’ radio and television – are now only two of many audiovisual platforms that can be used for educational purposes, albeit still quite important platforms in their own right;
- New digital media such as internet archives, e-learning applications, CD-ROMs and serious games are very well suited to offer educative as well as educational content with functionality convenience;

- New digital media offer more possibilities for non-linear, personal and collaborative use of educational media content, such as on-demand access to programmes as well as Internet portals that facilitate the interactive and collaborative use of audiovisual content for learning purposes. They also empower individuals or communities to generate and control their own media content, such as the online Wikipedia encyclopaedia or applications for teachers to create and share electronic teaching content. The growth of active content producing communities is challenging all traditional broadcasting and publishing organisations as the gatekeepers of information (Turpeinen, 2003: 309).

From an instrumental point of view, the digital world is opening wide horizons for any organisation involved in education via audiovisual means, including especially educational broadcasters. To a large extent, national public broadcasters, and specifically via their educational units, are embracing these new technologies and the Internet, in particular. This includes, for example, the digitalization and disclosure via the Internet of national PSB archives, such as the Creative Archive project from the BBC in the United Kingdom and the Teleblik project (for educational use only) in the Netherlands. Public broadcasters are playing a pivotal role in building this public space for universal access to digitalized collections, also referred to as the 'Digital Commons' (Murdock, 2005: 227).

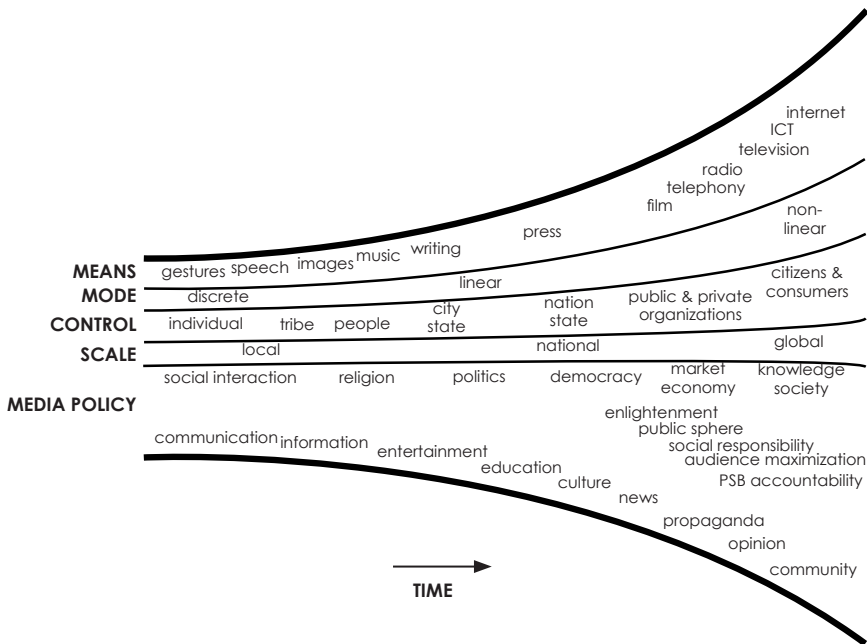
The additional value that new media can provide in the educational function also applies to other PSB functions such as news, culture and opinion-making. However, the remit, financing and organisation of many public service broadcasters are still predominantly radio- and television-centric. That inhibits the broadcasters' full potential for repositioning and development in the digital world. This is not to argue that traditional radio and television are no longer valuable platforms for educational services. On the contrary, in terms of audience reach and social impact broadcast media are still of great importance and will remain so for years to come. The point is that for public broadcasters, and educational broadcasting in particular, new digital media are increasingly instrumental to the fulfilment of public service goals that remain fundamental to mandates and missions. This ought to be a defining dimension of the rationale for public service media.

The current situation in much of Western Europe, including the Netherlands and Germany especially, is that public broadcasting policy and financing is defined within the realms of radio and television and the public service broadcasters' use of the Internet is regarded as an inappropriate 'side-step' subject to restrictions (economic, operational, or both). As our discussion so far suggests, new digital media – and above all the Internet – are very likely to *strengthen* the educational and other public service functions of media. Over time, the Internet will not revolve around print, radio and television in the media universe but rather print, radio and television are likely to converge into a more Internet-centric universe. Digitalization is the 'gravity' pulling things together.

New grounds for media policy and the position of education

Due to the unprecedented speed of recent changes in media technology, media consumption patterns and society, media policy makers are in a state of uncertainty and, actually, confusion. There is confusion about the nature, definition and impact of new media technologies, confusion about the social, political and legal frameworks to ‘capture’ these new technologies, confusion about viewers, listeners and Internet users that can no longer be identified in clear-cut, predictable social groups, and confusion about what should be safeguarded and how it can be as a public media service in the future. We can visualise accelerating changes in media and society that account for the growing confusion by taking a long-term historical view on the development of media and media policy as illustrated in Figure 2. This highlights the exponential speed of development change, resulting in a “horn” of the widening scope of media and media policy over time.

Figure 2. The cumulative horn of media and media policy



The “means” strip shows natural as well as technological means of communication that humans have developed over time, starting from the use of gestures and voice in tribal times up to ICT and Internet use in our time. The “mode” strip points to the structural nature of content: from “discrete” messages in early times to the typical “linear” mode in writing and books up to the “non-linear” (ubiquitous access) of digital content today. The “control” strip identifies who is

in control of the means of communication and media. This very much reflects the development of society and the history of political theory in the Western world (Sabine, 1973). Typical in recent years is the shift of media control to individuals as citizens and customers, due to the freedom that new digital media offer. The “scale” strip illustrates the geographic scope of media use evolving from local to global, which is primarily enabled by the reach of new media technology. The “media policy” strip depicts key societal structures, political notions and functional approaches that have defined media policy over time.

This gives an impression of the development of media policy as an area of great complexity that is often fuzzy but always place and time dependent. Within media policy, the top line from “social interaction” to “knowledge society” formulates the societal structure as a driver for media use and policy. The bottom line from “communication” to “community” illustrates the key functions that (mass) media have. The small cluster at the right-hand side, from “Enlightenment” to “PSB accountability”, highlights dominant political notions on media policy in recent history, in particular since the rise of radio and television. Since the dual (public/commercial) order became characteristic, public broadcasting tends to shift to a more external orientation with a stronger emphasis on social responsibility, audience maximisation and PSB accountability (Bardeel & Brants, 2003).

What can this schema tell us about the nature of media and media policy over time, and the implications of this for a typical public service function such as education? My observations are the following:

- The development of media as well as media policy is *cumulative* over time. One medium or policy framework does not replace a previous one. It rather *extends* what already exists. This is true for communication means that people still use, for example gestures and voice next to telephony and the Internet. People also still use media locally while living in a global world. From a functional perspective, the “public use” of media is for example still relevant for religion and for entertainment today, as was the case in the Roman Empire. From a political perspective, the Enlightenment ideals that shaped PSB (radio) in Western Europe from the 1920s still underpin PSB policy today
- Media policy is *intertwined* with technological development on one hand and with societal development on the other. This occurs because the use of media is *pervasive and ubiquitous* – it touches every aspect of life. This character is also cumulative and multiplies the impact that media can have in modern societies.
- *Education* is one of the typical functions that have been governed in public policy since ancient times. In particular the art and craft of printing (which enabled the rise of book-based curricula and culture) has had profound impact on public education as encouraged and governed by the state. This is still the case today, extended by the use of audiovisual

media for educational purposes. So education, like entertainment, information, culture and news as public media functions, has remained an integral part of the cumulative horn of media and media policy.

The implication of this cumulative and expansive nature of media and media policy is a lack of focus for future planning. The body of the horn continues to grow but what is the backbone? I argue the backbone is *functions*.

The functional perspective

This ‘horn’ schema suggests that it is simply the nature of media and media policy that it keeps expanding and that we should understand that as a fact of life. The question is: *What should be safeguarded as a public service, and how?* As the schema illustrates, there are many angles and grounds on which to base media policy. Out of this great ‘melting pot’ one can distil three elements that have *always* played an essential role in formulating media policy: 1) type of medium (distribution technology), 2) political and economic context (society), and 3) user value (functions)

Distribution technology dominated as the leading differentiator for media policy in the 20th century (van Cuilenburg & McQuail, 2003), and in particular related to press, broadcasting, and telecommunications. As distribution technologies converge that approach has become less relevant and less useful for media policy in the early years of the 21st century. The political and economic context has always played a major role and will continue to do so. However, this context is very volatile and already an on-going battleground of conflicting interests. The approach does not now offer the stable ground needed for any sustainable media policy.

As the schema illustrates, the notion of functions (such as entertainment, culture and information) has always (implicitly or explicitly) been important in media policy, but typically of minor importance compared with technology as the prime differentiator for media regulation and law. But in the 21st century media functions will become the *key differentiators* because as we move deeper into a digital age in which media and distribution technologies blur, markets are volatile, and users gain control. This is the new paradigm for media policy as the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy presented in its recent report on media policy in the digital age (WRR, 2005). The confusion and debate we are witnessing today is arguably a result of trying to get new media under control by situating them within the rigid legal framework of technology differentiation that have dominated PSB and press policy. As Dutch media lawyer and professor De Cock Buning suggested, today’s media landscape is akin to a “seven-headed monster”. If we cut off one head on this side another grows on another side. In this context traditional approaches to crafting media law are obsolete (De Cock Buning, 2006).

Taking a functional perspective to PSM is necessarily taking a user's perspective. With the fast changes in technology, consumption patterns and users becoming content creators and so public media companies will become irrelevant if user needs and behaviours are not continuously taken into account and accommodated. The public service broadcaster's relationship with the audience and its support will be a decisive factor for the future of PSM (Jakubowicz, 2007; Lowe, 2006). This functional approach can very well be combined with (normative) public service values and goals because it is a mechanism to guarantee that the content and service makes sense for both users and channels.

Taking a functional perspective, the question remains as to which functions should be safeguarded as public service media functions, and to what extent? The justifications for PSB typically have included technical grounds (i.e. bandwidth scarcity and investment hurdles), diversity, pluralism and maintenance of cultural identity, high and independent quality and editorial standards, dissemination of public information and the forming and sharing of public opinion, universal service for everyone including smaller target groups and, last but not least, market failure (Steemers, 2003: 125-129). The problem with these justifications is that most rest on values and objectives that are hard to quantify and also hard to apply only within the boundaries of broadcasting (Steemers, 2003: 127). If we are able to instead clearly define which functions we regard as essential to safeguard in media policy, then we can avoid all the confusion that is a result of defining media policy according to distribution technology. Distribution technology is of distant secondary importance in the digital age. Therefore PSM policy makes more sense than PSB policy. In the end values remain essential for answering these questions and for making the transition from PSB to PSM, including values that help determine the extent to which education is a PSM function.

Beyond market failure

The major argument against the legitimacy of PSB, and now PSM, is economic. Commercial broadcasters and publishers argue that if public broadcasters are allowed to invest public funding in the Internet and other new media activities competition will be unfair and the market will be distorted. The protection of competition has been predominant in the involvement of the European Commission in media policy. Increasingly, this has led to pressure on governments and PSB broadcasters to justify PSB activities and policies by accountability mechanisms (Coppens, 2005; Jakubowicz, 2003).

As far as educational broadcasting is concerned, we can see this tension between public and private interests when public broadcasters offer educational programming supported by books, materials or websites that are regarded by commercial educational publishers as competitors. If the state would take market failure as a differentiator for what is legitimate to offer as a public service and what is not (often put forward as an argument by commercial broadcasters), the

economic argument against PSM would nearly vanish. But there are two reasons why market failure as a leading principle for public service media policy would be a very risky enterprise, if not actually contrary to the public interest:

1. Defining and measuring 'market failure' is a fuzzy if not impossible exercise caught between public and private interests and likely to result in a process of PSM marginalisation if *perceived only on economic grounds*.
2. Defining public service goals and public service organisations *by what the market doesn't do* is 'liberalism in the extreme', trusting the market as the first principle for serving public interests. How can a public service organization (whether parliament, ministry or PSM) work effectively if its role and function is reduced to a mere 'back-up service' in case of market failure?

In the end the real question for the legitimacy of public services like PSM is what kind of world do we want to live in? Answering this question requires much more than economic reasoning and reaches far beyond the market failure paradigm.

But even from an economic point of view one can argue in favour of a PSM model. Public investments in PSM are not harmful for competition or the growth of media industry. New media technologies have always created new and lucrative markets for commercial players. Radio, television and the Internet are superb examples. Any fair assessment of the historic record must acknowledge that it is most often thanks to public funding that the hurdles to opening these markets for business have been cleared. The large initial investments in technology, infrastructures and (standard setting) services needed for telephony, radio, television, satellites and the Internet have been largely facilitated by *public funding*. The transport and energy sectors are other socially significant examples of this. So the investments made by PSM in new media and new media content should be understood as beneficial for markets because they are, in fact, paving the way for commercial profits in emerging markets. Relating this argument to the educational function of PSM, the initiatives and investments made by PSB to get audiovisual educational content into the class room and living room are not only helpful but actually vital in opening new markets, and need to remain robust to ensure full service value and high quality standards. Educational publishers sooner or later will thrive on these publicly enabled inroads.

Conclusion

In a time of dazzling change in technology and society, the need for and importance of educational services continue to stand out as an elementary public service mission, no matter the shape that requires. In the *Republic* Plato placed high value on education in his reliance on this to properly shape human nature and to produce a harmonious state (Sabine, 1973: 68-71). His conviction has been embraced in Western societies and was certainly reinforced by the En-

lightenment ideals that fundamentally shaped the nature of what would come to be known and valued as PSB in Western Europe. As electronic media are increasingly pervasive and ubiquitous in society they are, and ought to continue to be, essential means to facilitate education as an accessible public service for everyone, everywhere, at any time, and in addition to formal schooling. The shape of life today and into the future demands the tools and provisions for life-long learning – and re-learning. All recent changes in technology (digitalization), society (individualisation, knowledge society) and the media landscape (dual systems) do not weaken the need for education. On the contrary, all of that very much strengthens the need for education. It must therefore remain a vital PSM function, and as a function must be encouraged to adapt and develop every viable distribution technology available for achieving socially and economically beneficial objectives.

The meaning of digitalization for all PSM functions – and education in particular – is that it dramatically broadens opportunities for disclosing valuable content archives, narrowcasting, personalisation, multiplying content and access, and adding functionalities, as well as co-producing together with the public through user-generated content. PSM does not discount broadcasting, but it necessarily envisions something quite important that is in addition to broadcasting. This is a hopeful message for any organisation with a PSM mission. But it is good news beyond PSM per se because the initiatives and investments to develop new media services are already creating new infrastructure and building markets that the media industry will soon benefit from and later thrive on.

References

- Anderson, C. (2006) *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business Is Selling Less of More*. NY: Hyperion.
- Bardoel, J. and Brants, K. (2003) From Ritual to Reality: Public Broadcasters and Social Responsibility in the Netherlands. *Broadcasting & Convergence: New Articulations of the Public Service Remit*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- Capon, C. (2006) Empowering the People: Public Media Provide New Means in Education. In Nissen, C. (ed.) *Making a Difference: Public Service Broadcasting in the European Media Landscape*. UK: John Libbey.
- Coppens, T. (2005) Fine-tuned or Out-of-Key? Critical Reflections on Frameworks for Assessing PSB Performance. In Lowe, G.F. and Jauert, P. *Cultural Dilemmas in Public Service Broadcasting*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- De Cock Buning, M. (2006) *De Mediamachine als Zevenkoppig Monster* [The media machine as a seven-headed monster]. Amsterdam: Otto Cramwinckel Uitgever.
- Cuilenburg, J.v. and McQuail, D. (2003) Media Policy Paradigm Shifts: Towards a New Communications Policy Paradigm. *European Journal of Communication*, 18(2), pp.181-207.
- Jauert, P. & G.F. Lowe (2005) Public Service Broadcasting for Social and Cultural Citizenship: Renewing the Enlightenment Mission. *Cultural Dilemmas in Public Service Broadcasting*. Göteborg, Sweden: Nordicom.
- Jakubowicz, K. (2003) Bringing Public Service Broadcasting to Account. In Lowe, G.F. and Hujanen, T. (eds.) *Broadcasting & Convergence: New Articulations of the Public Service Remit*. Göteborg, Sweden: Nordicom.

- Jakubowicz, K. (2006) *PSB: The Beginning of the End, or a New Beginning in the 21st Century*. First presented as a paper at the RIPE@2006 conference, November, Amsterdam. (Revised for his chapter in this RIPE@2007 volume).
- Lowe, G.F. (2006) *Customer Differentiation and Interaction for Innovation: Two CRM Challenges for PSB*. Paper presented at the RIPE@2006 conference, November, Amsterdam.
- Machet, E. (2002) *A Comparative Analysis of Television Programming Regulation in Seven European Countries: A Benchmark Study*. Düsseldorf: The European Institute for the Media/NOS.
- McQuail, D. and Siune, K. (1986) *New Media Politics: Comparative Perspectives in Western Europe*. London: SAGE Publications.
- McLuhan, M. (1964) *Understanding Media: The extensions of Man*. NY: Signet.
- Meyer, M. (1997) *Educational Television – What Do People Want?*. UK: John Liberty Media.
- Meyer, M. (1993) *Educational Programmes on Television – Deficiencies, Support, Contributions to an International Symposium*. München: Chances, K.G. Saur Verlag.
- Murdock, G. (2005) Building the Digital Commons. Public Broadcasting in the Age of the Internet. In Lowe, G.F. and Jauert, P. (eds.) *Cultural Dilemmas in Public Service Broadcasting*. Göteborg, Sweden: Nordicom.
- New London Group (1996) *A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures*. Harvard Educational Review, 66(1).
- Sabine, G.H. and Thorson, T.L. (1973) *A History of Political Theory*. Hinsdale, Illinois: Dryden Press.
- SCP (2006) *De Tijd als Spiegel: Hoe Nederlanders hun Tijd Besteden* [The time as a mirror. How the Dutch spend their time]. The Hague: Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau.
- Steeners, J. (2003) Public Service Broadcasting Is Not Dead Yet: Strategies in the 21st Century. In Lowe, G.F. and Hujanen, T. (eds.) *Broadcasting & Convergence: New Articulations of the Public Service Remit*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- Thomass, B. (2003) Knowledge Society and Public Sphere: Two Concepts for the Remit. In Lowe, G.F. and Hujanen, T. (eds.) *Broadcasting & Convergence: New Articulations of the Public Service Remit*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- Turpeinen, M. (2003) Co-Evolution of Broadcast, Customized and Community-Created Media. In Lowe, G.F. and Hujanen, T. (eds.) *Broadcasting & Convergence: New Articulations of the Public Service Remit*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- Veen, W. and Vrakking, B. (2006) *Homo Zappiens: Growing up in a Digital Age* London: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- WRR (2005) *Media Policy for the Digital Age*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

The Audience Massage

Audience Research and Canadian Public Service Broadcasting

Philip Savage

A key question put to the RIPE@2006 gathering of public broadcasting researchers and practitioners was: “How are public service broadcasters [PSB’s] redefining their programme obligations and service commitments to meet changing audience expectations”? The answer hinges on a deeper question: “*Who* defines the audience that broadcasters serve, and *how*”? This chapter addresses that question.

The growth in new digital platforms increases PSB’s potential to play a significant role with users who are interactive and co-creators of their local and personal ‘mediascapes’. For broadcast researchers this requires assessing a range of new research methodologies and study results. I wish to address the means by which broadcast audience researchers position themselves in that broader context in which audience research is produced. Within the PSB context this means recognising and navigating the broader political and economic structures to ensure that the ‘language of audience’ remains open to and supportive of the public service mandate, rather than defaulting to narrow consumer-based notions, i.e. only ratings-drive notions of audience both in traditional broadcasting and in the forms it might take with digital media. At a very practical level public broadcasters (and those in support of PSBs) need to influence the evolution of audience research structures to support this work. We need to demonstrate how PSB’s (more accurately today, public service media, or PSM), can remain accountable to their audiences beyond commercial ratings; i.e., demonstrate their success in a broader manner related to public service goals relevant to the various communities in which they operate.

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation [CBC] tries to keep audience needs and concerns central despite a series of methodological pressures and political and economic structures that, while superficially celebrating consumer sovereignty, historically override audience needs and desires. The CBC’s alternative audience measures are here discussed in the context of CBC’s attempt to formulate a public service orientation to audiences in line with the broader ‘discourse about audience’. The range of the CBC’s audience-based performance indicators [PI] is assessed in light of an *audience massage* model that

critiques the discourse about audience at three levels: 1) Rhetorical – with attention to the *content* of audience research; 2) Framing – with attention to the *methodologies* of research generation, in particular the dominance of certain key quantitative methodologies encapsulated in commercial TV ratings; and, 3) Structural – with attention to the broader political and economic *structures* which support or constrain the language about audience that prevails, not only among industry professionals but by default in the definition of ‘public interest’ used to frame public service policy and goals.

As we shift from the ‘mass age’ of media to a far more personalised digital media environment the message does not automatically end. By exploring political and economic structures PSB’s will be prepared to consider the best new audience methodologies that do not overly constrict the framing of debate about audiences and the public interest, thus providing a wider range of research content that allows for a fuller picture of people’s media needs and desires.

The recent history in Canada – supposedly on the cusp of a full range of broadcasting and new media potential – points to the active message of the methodologies of audience measurement that have constricted the substance of debate. Although the CBC’s public service mandate is core to the system’s stated goals, as per the Canadian *Broadcasting Act* (1991), commercially-funded quantitative methodologies predominate as a direct result of the larger economic structures in which Canadian broadcasters and, indeed, all media operate. We are far from employing the full range of qualitative methods to examine audience uses of media. There is such little room for these alternative views of audience to be considered as legitimate methodology that alternatives to ratings-based methodologies are chronically under funded in the larger institutional support systems. In the transition to PSM these are limitations that need be overcome to secure the broader public interest in media services – i.e., beyond those fairly characterised as consumer-based and -oriented.

Origins of the ‘media message’ concept

After leaving the CBC in 2005 I undertook, as part of doctoral research at York University in Toronto, close study of the main research and policy documents relating to two key aspects of Canada’s changing broadcasting landscape – public broadcasting performance indicators, and support for indigenous television drama. I conducted over fifty in-depth interviews with broadcasting and policy leaders and audience researchers to develop a deeper understanding of the key themes in how decision-makers talk about audience and how that vocabulary makes its way into regulatory and policy decisions – for both public and private broadcasters (Savage, 2006). The discussion in this chapter is based on that study.

Canadian audience research in a global context

Relatively few scholars have written about audience research in professional institutions, and almost none in the Canadian context. One influential view was offered by American writer Michael Wheeler in *Lies, Damn Lies and Statistics* (1976). Wheeler chronicled the methodological abuses of institutional public opinion research for short-term rhetorical gain (politically and commercially) in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. He dedicated one chapter to “The Nielsen 1200” that reported his examination of the methodological shortcomings and commercial rhetoric arising from TV ratings. Wheeler argued that this system helped account for the bland middle brow television news resulting from its dominance in decision-making practices of network executives (Wheeler, 1976: 216-239).

American journalist, Ken Auletta, provided an update of sorts in *Three Blind Mice, How the TV Networks Lost Their Way* (1991). Auletta demonstrated how Nielsen ratings (by then based on 4000 or so metered households rather than the previous 1200) and the rhetorical misuse and misinterpretations of audience ratings were central to the vain struggle by the three then dominant American networks (ABC, CBS, NBC) to retain share with commercial and cultural hegemony.

In the British context similar research was pioneered in the 1980's and early 1990's by David Morley to create ethnographies of audience reception that more fully examined the power of audience members themselves, and to determine from a cultural studies perspective the kinds of power individuals and groups have to self-define them selves as audience. Ien Ang (1991) examined concepts of and about audience in both commercial and public service contexts to demonstrate the keen importance of ‘control’ as a decisive professional objective among broadcasters. Ang had some criticisms for PSB's attempts to control the definition of audience for their own ends in Britain and elsewhere. In this sense she documented how PSB companies also engage in the audience massage for their own ends – i.e. this issue is not confined to PSB organizations but is mainly really the fruit of a long history of commercial research for commercial interests.¹ In the Canadian context journalist Claire Hoy published an examination of the use and misuse of public opinion polling, *Margin of Error: Pollsters and The Manipulation of Canadian Politics* (1989). In this context the work on the history of audience research in Canada up to the 1980's by Carleton University Professor Ross Eaman in *Channels of Influence* (1994) is especially important.

Eaman's work offered a focused examination of institutional audience research in Canada that was particularly valuable in looking at how the public broadcaster might develop a more citizen-based interpretation of audience research. Eaman proposed that a PSB audience research department should combine three roles: 1) information to allow for audience maximisation; 2) information to allow for comprehensive audience feedback – quantitative and qualitative – needed as input for programming decisions; and 3) public participation in how the measurement would in fact take place (Eaman, 1994). Eaman

raised the question of the centrality to PSB of approaching audience research not only in the forms of programming or commercial feedback but more significantly for a third role – to get at the heart of the public broadcaster's *role* in society. For Eaman that role is essential for operationalising public participation which is crucial to the “cultural democracy” goals of public service broadcasting. He argued that the traditional Canadian defence of public broadcasting as a means to alleviate market failure in the production of Canadian program content was no longer enough. Through proper audience research, the public broadcaster could become a vital democratic site for broad public participation in decision-making and identity formation (*ibid*).²

Most recently and also in Canada, Marc Raboy of McGill University explored historically how the language of audience research would have a role not only for the broadcaster but for the larger policy community.

Within the institutional order of the state, general reliance on a policy rhetoric of ‘public interest’ is insufficient for policy makers who seek empirical data with which to justify their actions. Because the bulk of such data is currently produced as industrial audience research measuring a ‘market demand’, policy legitimization is skewed toward measures which conceptualize public interest as ‘what the public is interested in’, that is, what people are prepared to consume (Raboy et. al., 2003: 324).³

Much of this was summarised in the 1990's by former BBC Research Director Peter Menneer, who sought to develop a range of international PSB performance indicators (WRTC, 2000). To the extent that the alternative models expand the story of audience they serve a democratic purpose. As Raboy and his colleagues argued:

An alternative form of audience research, based more on a sociocritical approach, would allow for the legitimization of types of cultural policy which incorporate a fuller conceptualization of the public interest and its ties to the exercise of citizenship (Raboy et. al., 2003: 324).⁴

McLuhan's message/massage influence

The message model as a way of looking at the language of audience owes its genesis to Canadian communication theorist Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980), who was writing almost fifty years ago on the verge of the first electronic revolution dominated by the new medium of that era – television. He felt that the real impact of communication media has less to do with specific and transitory content (e.g., an advertisement or particular news story) and far more to do with the ways that seeing, hearing and feeling are conditioned over time as a product of our routine interaction with media. McLuhan encouraged a shift from focusing on the content to the forms of media communication: The medium is the message.

Fewer remember that McLuhan took this memorable phrase to a next level when he later wrote: the media are the *massage*. He suggested that the forms of mass media “soften us up” for their mediated messages. But McLuhan who was later adopted as the “patron saint of new media”⁵ did not provide a full examination of audience. His technological determinism left little room for audience autonomy, or for tracing the constraints on media technology exercised by political and economic power relationships. Although suggesting that television projects sensory information in a particular way that shapes how people look at the content, McLuhan did not focus much on how the transformation of audiences in the larger social, political and cultural realms in turn affects the nature of media.

How people constitute themselves as audience is increasingly the message today. Looking at shifting economic and political structures which either support or constrain the possibilities for a full range of audience experiences constitutes a key point for examination. The struggle over the role of audiences and the definition of audience – the rhetorical, framing and structural massage of audience – is crucial. As we move beyond the mass age and understanding audience as user becomes ever more crucial.

The PSB audience massage challenge

Clearly the main goal of audience research should be to function as honest intermediaries representing audience-defined interests to media decision-makers. In fact, as most professional broadcasters know and new audience researchers soon realise, the audience’s influence on research about their own programming needs and desires rests less with them than with the professionals designing surveys. In commercial broadcasting this is clear because the system requires a standard ‘currency’ – a way to measure people for advertising interests in a standardised form that facilitates a commercially rational way to compare, buy and sell airtime – and, significantly, to ‘target audiences’.

In the years I was involved in broadcast audience measurement, from the 1980’s into the new millennium, the emphasis was on a more reliable, daily measure of usage via the shift from diary recording of TV usage to set-top meters (introduced by Nielsen in Canada in 1989), and eventually to more passive and personalised metering systems in the late 1990’s and early 2000’s. Canada’s own BBM research company pioneered personal/portable people meters (PPM’s) that measured proximity to all radio and television broadcasts.

In today’s multi-media digital environment various research companies are attempting to augment the passive measurement of proximity via a range of listening/viewing/usage devices like PPM’s.⁶ But they are also emphasising the nature of individuals multi-platform use of similar content by measuring “total” audience, especially for print media as it makes its way onto new platforms, e.g. ‘viewership’ of newspaper content in print, via the Internet and as audio on podcasts.⁷ And they appear to be venturing into more ethnographic studies of audience “engagement” with media, although the major investment occurs

not in terms of programming but rather for advertising engagement.⁸ Regardless of which techniques are employed, and which commercial research companies employ them, the search is consistently to create a new standard that is acceptable for an array of discrete and integrated platforms.

Of course PSB (even more so PSM) and their audience researchers must keep pace with developments. But especially within PSB we need be keenly aware of tendencies in these larger structures to limit methodological variety that must inherently restrict the kinds of research findings that can emerge. I contend we must employ a wider variety of techniques to represent audience not merely as a commercial currency but also especially their citizen interests. To date and on average PSB's would appear to have done a good job of using a range of techniques, but the growth of commercial logic and market influences can well mean that institutional demands to create audience in an image for self-serving interests, as Ian Ang and others have observed, can overpower broader public service goals.

A close look at the organisation of methodologies and funding structures shows that it is naïve to believe that the message of audience in most audience research rests with those being interpreted. Its methodologies and funding remain firmly in the control of those doing the interpretation, and shows no sign of changing in the near future.⁹ This has particular significance when one considers that the accountability of broadcasters, and in particular for PSB, resides with government agencies who, in seeking "objective" measures of broadcaster success, turn increasingly to the commercially funded audience research groups (in Canada for example, BBM) and are unwilling to invest in alternative measures.

Audience message in public policy

For professional audience researchers it is abundantly clear that when findings are apprehended for public policy research results tend to take on (or more precisely to be spun into) a rhetorical rather than scientific role. Audience research reports, no matter how scientific or "objective" the researchers may think them to be, become part of the content of rhetorical strategies to influence outcomes in decision-making bodies which fund or regulate broadcasting. The reasons have much to do with the multi-level complexity impacting research interpretations which are essentially the product of complicated processes of massaging meanings in pursuit of specific purposes.

Audience rhetoric

At the first level of the message model, the rhetorical message of *content*, quantitative ratings and public opinion about audience attitudes comprise results that are used to support argumentation that partly relies on research content to be convincing. Such use has more to do with the primary interests of the funding

Table 1. Audience Message Model

1. Rhetorical (Content)	Research results used to support an argument.	E.g. Conservative Party use of ratings and public opinion poll results to undercut CBC support.
2. Framing (Media)	Research methodologies used to support an approach.	E.g. De-legitimation of alternative non ratings-based CBC performance indicators (triumph of the ratings).
3. Structural (Discourse)	Research systems integrated into a way of interpreting a social setting and organizing action.	E.g. Exclusion of qualitative audience research (outside the CBC) within decision-making bodies.

source for the research than with any objective public interest of audiences. From time to time obvious research ‘biases’ are exposed and may grab the headlines, especially when direct manipulation is uncovered.¹⁰

The Canadian Conservative Party argued in its dissenting chapter to the most recent parliamentary study of broadcasting (the ‘Lincoln Report’), that objective audience ratings demonstrated a precipitous audience share decline for CBC services, specifically for the English-language national CBC-TV network – well below 10% in the early part of the millennium (Canada, 2003: Figure 4.16). The Conservatives also pointed to public opinion polling to argue that the CBC in Canadians’ eyes was not valued as a source of indigenous TV programming, contrary to what the majority of MP’s believed to be broad public support by civic groups who spoke directly to the committee.¹¹ A study by the Canadian polling firm, Compas Research, published by the conservative-oriented (then Lord Conrad Black-owned) newspaper, *The National Post*, should have been used, they argued, to demonstrate a more comprehensive and accurate picture of Canadians’ “real” public interest in supporting Canadian programming (Canada, 2003).¹²

These cases illustrate how rhetorical debate about audience research and polling results are often over “correct interpretation” of audience research content and for quite subjective purposes. The point to be underlined is that any policy actor’s specific use of audience research content favouring one point of view over another is the most obvious audience message that occurs in policy debate, in Canada and elsewhere. Even if not the most profound or far-reaching, mapping the rhetoric of audience in various policy decisions in its self can be useful, and in fact has been revealing in case studies elaborated elsewhere.¹³

Audience frames

At the second level of audience message, framing via the *media* of research, the methodologies themselves coalesce into certain historical and institutional

patterns which support a fixed and limiting approach. Specific techniques frame and constrain audience research in ways that support a particular conception of media users. Thus, methodologies of audience research pattern the range of results that are likely to occur, or are later considered ‘worthy’ of discussion. In this sense looking at the built-in biases of certain methodologies provides a more robust understanding of the limits to notions of audience in various policy contexts. Although many in the broadcast industry engage in critical discussion about the content and results of audience research studies, few point to the inherent biases within key quantitative measures. But the approach used in research massages the latitude and implications that are possible in results.

What I would call the “triumph of the ratings” places the methodologies of alternative performance indicators, especially those using qualitative methodologies, at the margins of debate. The development of alternative methodologies is crucial for PSB because so much of what PSB does is difficult to quantify. There is an on-going battle to legitimate an expanded language about audience outside the accepted framework of quantitative measures which are primarily keyed to audience size and demography. We can expect this battle to intensify in the transition to PSM.

By way of illustration, consider recent debates about ‘CanCon’, the body of regulations that requires television broadcasters in Canada – both public and private – to fill at least 50% of their schedules with Canadian-produced programming.¹⁴ In the last ten years the broadcast regulator, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission [CRTC], as well as the main non-CBC public funding agency, the Canadian Television Fund [CTF],¹⁵ began to question the impact of quota regulation that apparently had not increased overall viewing of Canadian programming, especially Canadian television drama. To use the economic language that has predominated, the content regulations were effective at increasing Canadian programming “supply” but were not generating increased market “demand”. The proof, apparently, was in low ratings, especially for the CBC which had almost completely “Canadianized” its schedules. After much hand-wringing through the various agencies and inquiries, a new mantra about audience-service emerged within regulatory agencies, and indeed among broadcasters. The private broadcasters, in particular, seemed to “get religion” over the importance of Canadian programming that was valued and watched.¹⁶ They effectively lobbied to change regulatory and funding structures and mechanisms to reflect new audience-centric approaches, i.e. equating the public interest with “good” audiences.

The CRTC began to loosen its content regulation to give quota bonus points as well as financial incentives, largely through allowing more prime time advertising per hour for private broadcasters in Canadian TV entertainment programming that attracted large audiences.¹⁷ The CTF began to allocate its funding to TV producers that partner in projects with broadcasters who had a successful “track record” of attracting large audiences to previously produced Canadian programs. Indeed, the CTF overhauled their funding selection formula to incorporate a calculation of total audience reach per funded programme over past seasons.¹⁸

Absent from almost all of the discourse about audience as a definer of the new public interest in broadcasting was discussion about the range of audience experience, especially in connection with the programming. Such qualitative measures of programme impact and value for actual individuals or groups were considered non-objective for being too open to interpretation, it was argued. The major industry players preferred the default 'tried and true' ratings standards. In this view, ratings are the 'good' yardstick and services oriented to attract large audiences – mainly private commercial media wedded to American popular entertainment – are the 'good media'. They should be rewarded through looser regulation and more public funding for their 'good programmes'.

Of course it would be rather 'holier than thou' for PSB's or public service oriented lobbies to argue for a wholesale rejection of qualitative measures over quantitative measures of audience. But the latter are themselves 'open to interpretation', and without doubt the interpretation of qualitative data is 'tricky' and typically seen to be less valid due to lack of generalizability.¹⁹ Indeed, all results of audience research of whatever type require judgment in interpretation. The two key points which the framing critique here advance are: 1) it seems common sense to many that "numbers speak for themselves" when in fact there is a whole industry set up to demonstrate particularly favourable interpretations; and 2) the effort required to legitimise non-numeric understandings makes it a struggle to include them in the wider debate about broadcasting goals. As we'll see from talking to the President of the CBC soon, it often seems 'hardly worth the bother'. This is no accident but, rather, directly related to the deeper institutional structures and resource allocation that supports a narrow view of audience.

Audience structures

The third and deepest level of audience message, the structural connections which support a discourse, relates to how entire research *systems* and the research institutions that use them are integrated into dominant, commercial modes of interpreting the role of audience in the "business" of broadcasting. The deepest biases in broadcast players' and regulators' conceptions of audience are macro structures stemming from contradictions that are especially apparent within the mixed Canadian broadcasting system.

For instance, the methodological triumph of the ratings is used to further entrench a demand-side approach to audience which is taken as a measure of public interest. This approach is funded by private Canadian broadcasters who, in almost every case, are consolidated into four or five Canadian media conglomerates that dominate radio, TV, newspaper, magazine publishing, cable and satellite broadcasting distribution, and telecommunications in Canada.²⁰ Canadian institutional investment which seeks to develop measures of public service and relies on qualitative measures of audience wants and desires, represents less than one-twentieth of one per cent in the total broadcasting investment in Canada.

To the degree that government agencies like CRTC and CTF, which are charged with adjudicating the public interest, invest in seeking knowledge about audience they “buy in” – literally and figuratively – to the narrow commercially-based ratings approach. For instance, the CRTC argues that its lack of resources and expertise require it to spend almost all the research budget on subscriptions to the commercial ratings simply to ‘stay in the game’. As a result, pro-active research about how to serve an audience goes begging or is conducted on an ad hoc basis.²¹

Audience research in Canada is a \$200 million industry intricately connected to the business of commercial broadcasting.²² As such, audience research represents about 4% of the overall \$5 billion in the annual revenues of commercial TV and radio broadcasting in Canada.²³ The bill is paid almost entirely by commercial broadcasters and advertisers in support of their business goals.

Figure 1. Audience research revenues in Canada

	Other Research: ~ \$20 million Canadian dollars BBM, Nielsen, etc.
	Ratings Research: ~ \$ 40 million Canadian dollars BBM, Nielsen, etc.
Advertising Research: ~ \$150 million Canadian dollars Ipsos, Canadian Facts, Millward-Brown, etc.	

Pictured here are three main segments of uneven proportions in professional audience research: 1) Advertising Research, 2) Ratings Research, and 3) Other Research. The first two are well-funded and jointly comprise industrial audience research almost entirely oriented to support commercial broadcasting in Canada. The total annual spend on advertising research is the biggest segment and in the range of \$150 million.²⁴ Ratings research accounts for about \$40 million in revenues per year according to industry sources.²⁵ By far the smallest segment is qualitative audience research, “other” in the figure. This includes both public opinion survey research regarding audience attitudes and a range of professional but non-generalizable qualitative work (e.g., program testing, media ethnographies, one-on-one field interviews and focus groups – but excluding focus groups for advertising pre-testing). This segment has an annual spend in the range of \$20 million annually in Canada and the greatest contributor is the CBC through its audience research department. But given that about two-thirds of the CBC’s audience research budget is tied to long-term TV and radio ratings contracts (with BBM), that amount effectively diminishes to about \$10 million.²⁶ Thus, only about one-third of CBC Research spending and 5%

of the total Canadian spending on audience research (or the one-twentieth of one percent of total broadcasting revenues) is targeted to developing a better understanding of what Canadian radio, television and new media users need, want and expect from programming and services.

Even with the bulk of its resources tied to ratings, the CBC Research Department for a long-time remained the only significant on-going research infrastructure set up to provide analysis of Canadian broadcasting attitudes and opinions. Increasingly that qualitative spend is dedicated to developing and updating corporate level performance indicators used to justify its existence as an institution. Many of these performance indicators mix in a further blend of quantitative audience measures with financial accountability and efficiency criteria (Staple, 2005). A relatively small portion of the CBC Research Department budget is available to help programmers throughout the organisation provide better programming based on citizen needs and desires.

CBC performance indicators

In conformity with requirements of the *Broadcasting Act*, every year the CBC submits an updated five year “corporate plan” to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, responsible for administering the Act. Although this is just one of the major regulatory and corporate reports that the CBC submits annually, it provides good insight into the current use of PIs²⁷. “Broadcasting Value, CBC/Radio-Canada Corporate Plan, 2005-06 to 2009-10” argued:²⁸

As Canada’s most significant cultural institution, CBC/Radio-Canada is an invaluable instrument in bringing Canadians together, and in communicating Canadian values to Canadians and across the globe [...] The starting point for delivering this mandate is, of course, a focus on broadcasting value and four years ago, CBC/Radio-Canada set itself the challenge of delivering uniquely Canadian programming as efficiently as possible, that is, of broadcasting the greatest possible value to Canadians... (CBC, 2004: 1).

The CBC is in a position to use a range of ratings and attitudinal measures to demonstrate – or “frame” – their message. Thus in the report’s appendix, “Progress Report”, the CBC authors referred to six key performance indicators – all audience based – which the CBC uses to demonstrate its “commitment to accountability”:

1. *Weekly Reach*: the number of different people who use a CBC/Radio-Canada service each week.
2. *Weekly Share*: The percentage of all listening (viewing) time captured by each CBC/Radio-Canada service.
3. *Canadian Content* (television only): The percentage of CBC Television’s and Télévision de Radio-Canada’s whole day (6:00 a.m. to midnight)

and prime time (7:00-11:00 p.m.) schedule that is comprised of Canadian programs.

4. *Essential Service*: the percentage of the adult Canadian population who agree that it is essential that CBC/Radio-Canada television and radio is available to Canadians.
5. *Satisfaction*: The percentage of the adult Canadian population who agree that they are satisfied with the programming offered by CBC/Radio-Canada's English and French television and radio services.
6. *Distinctive Service*: The percentage of the adult population who agree that CBC/Radio-Canada's television and radio services offer programming that is not available on other English and French television/radio stations (CBC, 2004: 69)

Beyond ratings and CanCon measures – yardsticks via the BBM ratings or the regulatory tracking that the CBC jointly operates with commercial broadcasters – the source for qualitative PIs is the CBC-designed Qualitative Ratings Survey [QRS]. The QRS measures the CBC's overall success in terms of viewer/listeners' perception of CBC as: 1) satisfying; 2) essential; and, 3) distinctive; as well as measures of, 4) "comprehensiveness"; and, 5) the "trust" people have in the CBC (CBC: 2004, p.16).

In addition the authors of the "Broadcasting Value" report make considerable effort to explain how different qualitative measures beyond the QRS have been developed for the different media lines within the CBC. In this sense they clearly signal the importance of methodological variety to make the broader message (and allow for specific rhetorical content beyond pure usage) to frame their message. For instance, in the politically charged arena of CBC English-language TV's relatively poor share performance, the report provides specific research results in "Quality Measures, English Television Report Card." This refers to the specific public opinion survey work that was carried out on behalf of CBC English TV to measure the success of its "Transformation" strategy (starting in 2001, and continuing), and which also merits special attention early in the report:

The primary goal of English Television's Transformation strategy was to increase the real and perceived value of CBC Television. Value is a function, not only of how many people use CBC Television, but also the perceived quality of the programming provided by CBC Television, whether people watch CBC Television or not" (CBC, 2004: 1).

When asked directly about the QRS and other additional quality measures, CBC senior managers were open in their desire to use the qualitative tools to shift the debate (reframe it) away from a purely commercial-ratings driven model of success. As CBC President, Robert Rabinovitch, said:

One of the reasons for doing all this quality stuff, is to say, "Listen shareholder, here is how we would like to be measured in terms of audience delivered, numbers of programs, types of programs, what we've done, etc., but also what you tell us, and you're telling us [what it is] that you like about us" (Rabinovitch, 2005).

In this sense, the CBC knows it will always be measured to some degree by their performance as represented by quantitative share or ratings measures. But managers are hopeful they can broaden the range of measures for a more public mandate oriented assessment.

I think we have to develop all kinds of measures, and we have to share them. But I don't think it is appropriate for the public broadcaster to be judged by one measure alone. Audience in the private sector is a surrogate for revenue, which is a surrogate for PBIT [profits before income tax]. And that's what you [as a commercial broadcaster] want (Rabinovitch, 2005).

The realpolitik of CBC audience performance

As a "mixed" public broadcaster the CBC's dependence on commercial revenues inescapably puts it in a position to have to care about the business of audience ratings.²⁹ But even on the non-commercial side of the house in the multiple radio services of CBC and Radio-Canada (which are commercial-free), there is increasing evidence that politicians and policy makers require quantitative measures in the *realpolitik* of decisions about resources. They readily engage in the rhetorical use of audience but find themselves stymied in utilising the qualitative results that methodologically represent a new language to many government decision-makers.

Rabinovitch was quite candid about how in times of crisis Members of Parliament and others are really only interested "in the numbers" (R. Rabinovitch, personal interview, April 20, 2005). In particular, political antennae are highly attuned to the ratings, that is, the share numbers of the services and, in particular, English TV with its apparent chronic under-performance. Senior executives like Rabinovitch are frustrated by this, but in the real world of politics they respond using the same language to some degree.

My argument with people has been that if I can have a 7-8% share [for CBC English TV], I'll be tickled pink. Because don't forget that you expect me to do mandate programming. You expect me to do children's programming, *Opening Night* [prime time arts program], things of this nature, which would definitely not give a share. Secondly I run the news at 10 o'clock at night against the best hour of American programming. And thirdly, I'm competing against dumped American programming in general. So if I can get a 7 or an 8, I am not at all upset. And I can make that argument, and I think I've won that case with most parliamentarians. And I've told them Global's at 9. And

CTV, which has 19 out of 20 of the top [US] programs, and what's their share? It's about a 13. It's not that bad [for CBC] considering what our mandate is (Rabinovitch, 2005).

The mix of qualitative and quantitative PIs may be appropriate to the CBC, but given the demands on the budget and its diminishing place in the broadcasting system vigilance is required to re-balance the level of research that more broadly explores Canadians' media needs and desires. Furthermore, as various people from the CBC President on down acknowledge, there is a constant struggle to gain and maintain legitimation for the non-quantitative measures of audience experience. This parallels the constant struggle within the Canadian policy environment to maintain support for non-commercial models of public service media. The CBC stands almost alone in generating institutional support for qualitative audience research, and insofar as the CBC has built up that tradition it is in real danger of withering on the vine. That has implications not only for the legitimization of the CBC in the Canadian media system, but also for the language about audience in media policy overall.

Conclusion – the marginal audience

In the “business” of broadcasting in Canada there has been relatively little investment in understanding audience beyond a narrow commercial model of media consumption. In that sense, at least, audiences remain at the margin with regard to their full exploration and also integration into decision making about media in the public interest. This holds despite the case that in recent years broadcasters and their regulators have ‘got religion’ on the value of audience in helping understand policy goals. Although at a rhetorical level audience has made its way from the margins to the centre of debates about content and performance, in practice the conception of audience in Canadian media policy encompasses a very narrow view.

In turn, audience researchers in Canada, while initially exploring new measures of audience through PPM measurement in the 1990's, have tended to fall behind other countries exploring the potential of new techniques for measuring the fullest range of individuals' multi-platform usage and attitudes. The sole remaining national broadcast measurement company, BBM, is dominated by commercial broadcaster interests and is wedded to perfecting media usage by proximity methodologies. Insofar as BBM considers more attitudinal and even ethnographic measures of media “engagement”, they seem willing to follow the U.S. where the emphasis is on advertising engagement rather than broader public service goals. Overall, only a tiny portion of the total audience research budget goes to examining changing audience needs and desires.

As a result, it is not surprising that in Canada media audiences continue to be seen as a means to an end – demonstrating audience proximity to advertising embedded in individual media streams – even as the business model for

commercial broadcasting falters. This is a failing presumably of the private broadcasters and at one level need not worry Canadian citizens (except insofar as they are personal investors in the four-to-five main publicly traded broadcast conglomerates). However, given the default position of industry-funded audience research as the means for measuring broadcasting's success against legislated goals, the narrow view of audience has a broader effect. That limited language or discourse constrains the advancement of a broader and more democratic public input to the broadcasting system. Even inside the CBC keeping audience needs and concerns central remains a struggle internally within the CBC and politically within the broader Canadian society. While trying to maintain a broader audience perspective the CBC finds little structural or funding support for a broad and more exploratory range of media measurement methodologies.

The "Audience Massage" model is proposed as an approach to understanding the value and future of PSB audience research – with application to other broadcasters in other countries and as we move to new methodologies of audience measurement in the multimedia age. It should help one move beyond the surface meanings of individual audience research study results and their considerable, at times, public controversy.

The model proposes close examination at a deeper level of the discursive language about audience, and especially the frames that result from certain formal characteristics of audience research methodologies as they can have developed over time. In turn, the framing of audience should be understood as something organized within institutional research systems that are part of the larger political and economic structures of broadcasting and public policy. This broader perspective may help scholars, citizens and PSM as they grapple with the potentiality of measuring user needs and desires to take a more active role in the creation and sharing of their own mediascapes.

Notes

1. By the time of her writing in the late 1990's Ien Ang (1996 and 1999) had developed a critical post-modern view of audience research. She categorized even the best intentioned PSB research, including that using qualitative/ ethnographic techniques, as almost completely subject to institutional control and manipulation.
2. Eaman's argument was relevant at a time when Canada, through its geographic proximity to the United States, was particularly vulnerable to cross-border cultural flow; it became more widely relevant in the period of his writing in the 1980's and 1990's with instant satellite distribution worldwide (when many other more geographically removed countries suffered "Canadianization", becoming effectively U.S. cultural neighbours). This is particularly relevant again in the era of digital networks where programming abundance and comparatively inexpensive distribution makes scarcity and market failure arguments less relevant, at least.
3. Both Raboy and Eaman credit an earlier Canadian scholar for first exploring the range of roles for audience at the time of television's widespread introduction in Canada. In 1959 Professor Alan Thomas of the University of British Columbia wrote about trying to re-conceptualize audience – both theoretically and in terms of practical policy discussions – to move away from notions of passive receivers of broadcast programming to active members of the entire

- broadcasting enterprise: "Having created an audience out of our population [...] we must now find a way to make this audience responsible and articulate" (as quoted in Eaman, 1994: 3-4). Thomas presented one of the first theoretical analyses of the Canadian broadcasting experience from an audience perspective and positioned the notion of audience alongside that of the market and the public. Each of these three terms – market, public, and now audience – were to be seen as essentially interchangeable as ways of describing the population relative to the national broadcaster (Raboy, 1990).
4. And indeed this organization's last conference in 2004 was – excuse the pun – 'ripe' with developments on the trials and tribulations of European public broadcasters' ability to make more public, democratic and meaningful performance indicators, c.f. Bardoel et al. (2005) on the Netherlands experience.
 5. So described nearly 30 years after his writing by the predominant new media magazine, *Wired*.
 6. In Canada the commercial broadcasters' cooperative measurement company, BBM (which recently absorbed the Canadian Nielsen operations), has instituted TV measurement using a personal people meter in Quebec, and has experimented with that for radio measurement. (BBM. "Portable People Meter panel to expand to 800 households in Québec Franco" Press Release, January 9, 2006. Toronto: BBM. Available at: <http://www.bbm.ca/en/press.html>. The same sort of technology has been adapted for other media, including outdoor advertising (Australian Market and Social Research Society. "The future of audience measurement". "Research News, June 2005" Sydney: AMSRS, 2005. Available at: <http://www.amsrs.com.au/index.cfm?a=detail&id=1794&eid=112>).
 7. "In newspapers, worried publishers want to make more of three key ideas they think are missed by the old notion of circulation, the number of newspapers sold each day. That metric, they argue, fails to recognize [1] how many different people actually read a paper, [2] how much time they spend with it, and [3] the number of people who read the paper online. Their goal is some measurement that will capture total audience." The Pew Foundation's "State of the News Media 2007: Audience". Available at: http://www.stateofthenewsmedia.org/2007/narrative_overview_audience.asp?cat=3&media=1.
 8. Nielsen Media Research in the United States as part of its 2006 "Anytime Anywhere Media Measurement" (A2M2) initiative is devising new survey techniques around audience engagement (Nielsen Media Research "Anytime Anywhere Media Measurement" New York, NMR, 2006. Available at: <http://www.nielsenmedia.com/nc/portal/site/-Public/menuitem.9716da1f5789380e211ba0a347-a062a0/?-vgnnextoid=406ae2b5079bb010VgnVCM100000ac0a260aRCRD>).
 9. A point clearly made by Ien Ang (1991).
 10. This parallels the tendency by special interest groups to examine individual stories in TV newscasts to show 'bias' in one reporter or one station's reporting. Increasingly scholars look deeper into the format-driven 'frames' or structural constraints in the economics of news production that involve more inherent and essentially effective tendencies to limit or exclude certain points of view systematically and over longer periods of time. See, for example, Hackett et al. (1992).
 11. The Lincoln Report was officially titled *Our Cultural Sovereignty: The Second Century of Canadian Broadcasting. Report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage*. It was the most recent of many Canadian parliamentary and royal commission enquiries into the state of Canadian broadcasting. The opposition Conservative Party, then known as the Canadian Alliance, was the only party to issue a dissenting report. The Quebec sovereign-ist party, the Bloc Québécois, the social democratic party, the NDP, along with the governing Liberal party issued a majority report which continued to place CBC as central to the goals of public-service based Canadian broadcasting. In February 2006 the Conservative party won the Canadian federal election with a minority government, a situation unchanged at the time of writing in May 2007.
 12. *The National Post* was established in 1998 as Canada's second national daily by Canada's most famous (or infamous depending upon one's opinion) media baron, Conrad Black. *The National Post* was explicit in its conservative agenda to "unite the right" in Canada. It also

- took upon itself the task of providing a stream of anti-CBC articles, including a “CBC watch” column by their later editor-in-chief, Matthew Fraser, which sought out CBC inefficiencies, reporting biases and other sins.
13. See Savage (2006). In that work I suggest that it is also useful for professional researchers and academics to “weigh in” to determine how to limit rhetorical bias in the reporting of audience research results themselves. That is, to scrutinize the content of audience research to ensure that the social scientific methodology underlying the research is reliable, valid and transparent. Sadly it has been left largely to the CBC to engage in the rhetorical battle of “my research is better than your research” with its limited resources.
 14. It is up to 80% for CBC in the evening period of broadcast.
 15. Which provides public subsidies to independent producers who are able to guarantee exhibition on either the public or private television services.
 16. Of course this was no coincidence. It was part of a documented lobbying effort to ensure audience success with Canadian programming. The regulatory schema was tied closely to the commercial success of low cost and imitative versions of popular American programming, e.g. “Canadian Idol” or “Canada’s Next Top Model” (Savage, 2006).
 17. In spring 2007 the CRTC further de-regulated controls on advertising minutes per hour, effectively eliminating them after private broadcasters cried poverty in the face of new media video competition.
 18. Canadians were not consulted – even via opinion polls – about a diminution of supply and range of Canadian television programming, which has been one effect of the demand side policy. In May 2007, the CRTC abandoned the quid pro quo of advertising incentives for airing Canadian drama programming (see note above), when the newly Conservative-appointed CRTC Chairman issued a ruling to more or less remove all limits on the minutes of television ads per hour for broadcasters. “These changes reflect our approach of developing lighter and more targeted regulation to achieve the objectives of the Broadcasting Act,” said Konrad von Finckenstein, Q.C., Chairman of the CRTC. ‘Broadcasters will have the flexibility to air more advertising, and Canadian viewers will ultimately decide what is acceptable’” (CRTC, 2007b). Similarly, when the new CTF formula was used by the CBC, still by far the largest producer of Canadian programming, to support its claims for a fixed portion of the fund, the largest media conglomerates, who contribute through a tax on cable and DBS revenues to support the fund, cut off or threatened to cut off their contributions to the CTF. Vidéotron and Shaw argued they would not pay to fund “unpopular Canadian TV”, especially if it helped indirectly pay the CBC’s programming costs. The new Conservative Minister of Canadian Heritage, Bev Oda, remained almost completely silent in response, leaving it to the CRTC’s von Finckenstein to plead with the hold-out media giants to pay up with the promise of a special task force to “develop a consensus to resolve the concerns raised by stakeholders” (CRTC, 2007a).
 19. However, it can be argued of course that in a media environment of various platforms of radio and video delivery, the nature of highly niched market segments makes even much of the ratings based approaches difficult to generalize from existing samples of a few thousand people nationally.
 20. The five main broadcast groups are: 1. CTVglobemedia; 2. Rogers (which is making abid to acquire the third largest English TV network, CHUM) ; 3. Quebecor Media (owner of Vidéotron); 4. Corus (in partnership with Shaw); and, 5. CanWest Global (owners of *The National Post*). Together these companies dominate the Board of Directors of BBM, the monopoly ratings company in Canada. Although theoretically a cooperative of the broadcast industry (including the CBC) and advertising agencies, almost every BBM decision is made in favour of the largest private media companies. The CBC is left with one vote out of over a dozen on the BBM board. While for some years BBM had competition from Nielsen Media Research, in 2004 BBM reached a joint venture agreement with Nielsen which ultimately put their operations in Canada under the control of the BBM Board.
 21. According to the CRTC out of a third of million dollar annual budget for research, \$300K is allocated to BBM-Nielsen ratings contracts leaving about \$30K per year for “other” research.

- This follows the cutting of the CRTC's own independent audience research department some years ago (C. Dalfen, personal interview, April 4, 2005).
22. All figures are approximate and are in Canadian dollars for the year 2005 (date most recently available). The 200 million Canadian dollars figure is the equivalent of about 140 million euros (August 2007 exchange rates).
 23. According to the CRTC estimates in 2004, commercial radio in Canada had revenues of approximately \$1.2 billion, and commercial TV (including pay/specialty operations as well as conventional TV) revenues were approximately \$3.9 billion. This excludes CBC public revenues of just over \$1 billion (CRTC, 2004).
 24. This estimate was developed based on reporting information found on a range of web sites for major market research firms doing advertising research work – e.g. Ipsos-Reid, Millward-Brown – as well as from personal interviews (none of which wish to be identified individually). There is, unfortunately, no national single source for estimates of either advertising research or market research in Canada (K. Deal, personal interview, April 11, 2005).
 25. Neither Nielsen nor BBM publicly acknowledge their revenue base, but interviews with a selection of audience researchers confirm annual revenues of approximately \$20 million in the ratings business components of the two companies (Savage, 2006).
 26. That two-third investment is argued as necessary in part because of the CBC's commercial TV functions – English and French. It also serves the rhetorical purpose of allowing the CBC to keep tabs on the ratings currency that can and has been used to undermine the very existence of the public broadcaster, including against the non-commercial CBC radio networks. For more on the long and ignoble history of such attacks see Eaman (1994).
 27. CBC performance indicators are discussed with relevance to 2004 measures, given the period of active interviewing done by myself at that time for the doctoral research; the basic mix of quantitative and qualitative measures has not changed significantly between 2004 and the time of writing this chapter. This is evidenced in the latest CBC corporate planning reports (updated to 2006) available on line at: <http://cbc.radio-canada.ca/docs/plan/2006/index.shtml>.
 28. There is at least one more recent example of the document available publicly, but it does not differ substantially.
 29. Up to autumn 2005 only the CBC-TV services accepted advertising; CBC Radio and new media sites remained commercial-free. At that point the CBC decided for revenue reasons to run banner ads and other commercial content on its web sites, although the radio networks remain, by CRTC condition of licence, commercial free.

References

- Ang, I. (1991) *Desperately Seeking the Audience*. London: Routledge.
- Ang, I. (1996) *Living Room Wars: Rethinking Media Audience for a Postmodern World*. London: Routledge.
- Ang, I. (1999) In the Realm of Uncertainty: The Global Village and Capitalist Postmodernity. In Mackay, H. and O'Sullivan, T. (eds.) *The Media Reader: Continuity and Transformation*. London: SAGE.
- Auletta, K. (1991) *Three Blind Mice: How the TV Networks Lost Their Way*. NY: Random House.
- Bardoel, J., d'Haenens, L. and Peeters, P. (2005) Defining Distinctiveness: In Search of Public Broadcasting Performance and Quality Criteria. in Lowe, G.F. and Jauert, P. (eds.) *Cultural Dilemmas in Public Service Broadcasting*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- BBC (2004) *Building Public Value: Renewing the BBC for a Digital World*. London: BBC.
- Canada (1991) *Broadcasting Act*. Ottawa: RSC.
- Canada (2003) *Our Cultural Sovereignty: The Second Century of Canadian Broadcasting. Report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage*. Ottawa: The Queen's Printer.

- CBC (2004) *Broadcasting Value, CBC/Radio-Canada Corporate Plan, 2005-06 to 2009-10*. Ottawa: CBC.
- CBC (2005) *Annual Report, 2004-2005*. Ottawa: CBC.
- Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (2004) *Broadcast Policy Monitoring Report 2004, Radio, Television, Broadcasting Distribution, Social Issues, Internet*. Ottawa: CRTC.
- Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (2007a). *The CRTC creates a Task Force on the Canadian Television Fund*. Ottawa: CRTC, February 20.
- Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (2007b). *The Commission establishes a new approach for Canadian conventional television*. Ottawa: CRTC, February 20, 2007.
- Eaman, R. (1994) *Channels of Influence: CBC Audience Research and the Canadian Public*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Eaman, R. (1996) Putting the 'Public' into Public Broadcasting. In Homes, H. and Taras, D. (eds.) *Seeing Ourselves, Media Power and Policy in Canada*. Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Canada Inc.
- Hackett, R., Gilsdorf, W., and Savage, P. (1992) News Balance Rhetoric: The Fraser Institute's Political Appropriation of Content Analysis. *Canadian Journal of Communication* [Online], 17(1). Available: <http://www.cjc-online.ca/viewarticle.php?id=69>.
- Hoy, C. (1990) *Margin of Error: Pollsters and The Manipulation of Canadian Politics*. Toronto: Seal Books
- McLuhan, M. (1964) *Understanding Media, The Extensions of Man* (2nd Edition). NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Morley, D. (1989) *The Nationwide Audience*. London: British Film Institute.
- Rabinovitch, R. (2005) Personal interview with Robert Rabinovitch, President, CBC. April 20, 2005.
- Raboy, M., Proulx, S. and Dahlgren, P. (2003) The Dilemma of Social Demand, Shaping Media Policy in New Civic Contexts. *Gazette: The International Journal for Communication Studies*, 65(4-5).
- Savage, P. (2006) *The Audience Message: Audience Research and Canadian Broadcasting Policy*. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation. Toronto: Joint Graduate Programme in Communication and Culture, York University-Ryerson University.
- Staple, S. (2005) Personal interview with Stan Staple, Director of Research and Strategic Analysis, CBC. April 5, 2005.
- Wheeler, M. (1976) *Lies, Damn Lies and Statistics*. NY: Dell.
- World Radio and Television Council, WRTC (2000) *Proceedings of the WRTC Research Project, Miami Seminar (10 May 2000) and Proposals for a WRTC Initiative*. London: Peter Menneer Research.

THE ROOTS OF PSM

Does History Matter?

Grasping the Idea of Public Service Media at Its Roots

Slavko Splichal

The unique nature and importance of media communication for individuals and society has historically encouraged critical journalists, media practitioners, activists, social scientists and philosophers to produce a radical critique. The substance of this critique opposes subsuming freedom of the press under the regime of private property and ownership. It has been directed in favour of a journalism motivated by real public interest. The critique recognises that without an effective power of citizens to have access to the media and to also influence media in terms of their values, interests, and preferences, the idea of a public sphere is necessarily deprived of its constitutive principle of *publicness*.

During the past 200 years so dominated by the ideology of the commercial freedom of the press, this critical stance toward privately owned media never managed to seriously challenge that dominant mode of reasoning about the media, public opinion and the public sphere. This created the false impression of public service as a utopian project. A retrospective vision of early radical ideas of press regulation developed by C. Bücher, F. Tönnies and their contemporaries is useful at this watershed moment of transformation because it invites reflection on valid reasons for public “interference” with the media that is necessary to prevent them from serving only particularistic political and commercial interests. This is highly relevant in contemporary debate about public service media with an eye towards its future development.

In this concluding chapter we establish a critical view about media and society relations by emphasising historically influential ideas that enjoy fresh currency in contemporary debate. In affect, we go back to the beginning for a critical reframing of the present and future conditions of public service media [PSM] that is highly relevant and deeply needed today. We begin with an outline of the (anti-)utopianism associated with the concept of publicness, especially when keyed to its “computopian” character in recent decades. That is obviously relevant to any discussion about public service media, i.e. beyond broadcasting and relying primarily on non-linear digital media platforms. Here we are concerned with what stands in the way of achieving a truly participatory and information utility condition. We then review the remarkably prescient insights offered by

Marx, Bücher, and Tönnies, in particular, to glean renewed understandings about the problems and challenges inherent in a primarily industrialised, commercialised and commodified incorporation of the press with its journalistic functions – a condition that is increasingly overwhelming in European media “markets” today. We conclude with critical discussion about the public/private distinction as a still and keenly relevant aspect in and of the transition from public service broadcasting to public service media. Throughout the chapter, we devote attention to the continuing importance of the idea of *publicness* and the practices of publicity as fundamental for democratic process.

From a categorical mistrust of newspapers to “Computopia”

Modern debates on media prevalently appear to conceptualise democratic media and their significance for public engagement and participation by stressing their political independence and the inviolability of the private property right as its prerequisite. Public service media only seldom emerge as essential to democracy. Quite often the legitimacy of the public service status of the media is even contested. Likewise, the efforts of communication theory to explain the phenomena under study and to provide a normative framework are rarely accompanied by self-reflection or directed by a self-conscious analysis of its own history.

The two deficits raise at least two important questions. Firstly, whether a conception of public service media can rightly be described as substantial and contributing to an understanding of the nature of social communication, and particularly emancipatory communication? Secondly, does a retrospective self-reflection of past media and communication theories help define the meanings of publicness for the media and communication in general in modern democracies?

Reflections on intellectual contributions to, and challenges for, society created by communication studies bring us back to the seventeenth century to find the roots of critical thinking about the media. “Critical” at that time included largely an unconditional mistrust of newspapers rather than a critique of censorial attempts directed against newspapers. Early theorists of the press largely believed that rulers and their activities should be protected against public exposure and that actions of governments ought not be covered by the press because they were liable to be too complicated, unfinished, or too demanding to be understood or appreciated by readers. This was argued by Tobias Peucer in 1690, for example. Even reading the press had for quite some time a dubious reputation as Rousseau suggested in his comment about “horrid disorders which the press has already caused in Europe” in his *Discours Sur les Sciences et les Arts* (1750).

This kind of simplistic and prejudiced criticism of the press vanished rather quickly as newspapers expanded and became the most common medium expressing and representing public opinion, as for example conceived by Jeremy

Bentham (1820). But before newspapers reached nation-wide circulation in the most developed parts of Europe, the press had already largely “exchanged” its function of serving the public to become an *organ of political parties*, precisely what Rousseau was afraid of, or the bare *capitalist business* that Tönnies (1922) warned against. Freedom of the press was degraded and downgraded to a species of property right and the freedom of entrepreneurship.

In the mid-nineteenth century, critiques about the press as an estate changing in directions hostile to its democratic potential were invested with theories of publicness and public opinion, and marked by debates about press reforms. Those debates focused on the ideas of the public sphere and the role of public media in it, if stated in contemporary language.

A century later, Yoneji Masuda argued in his pioneering book on *Information Society as Post-industrial Society* (1980), or more simply *Computopia*, that in the future the management of “information utility” consisting of public information processing and service facilities should be organised as a “citizen management type” – at least in addition to “the business type” and the “government type.” He thought that would become predominant in the long run because “the autonomous management by citizens of the information utility is an essential prerequisite for the ideal information society that would be directed toward information accumulation, problem solving and opportunity development.” Masuda’s idea of public service is based on the argument that:

- (1) Only by citizen participation in the management of information utilities will the self-multiplicative production effect of information be expanded, (2) autonomous group decision making by ordinary citizens will be promoted, and (3) the dangerous tendency toward a centralized administrative society will be prevented (Masuda, 1980/1983: 81).

Masuda related his argument for public service to the great importance of information that, as economic product, exceeds goods, energy, and services. As a consequence he emphasised the need to expand “the public economy,” which refers to economic activity for public benefit rather than for profit.

In the society he envisioned, the private ownership of capital, free wheeling competition and profit maximisation, the key economic principles of industrial society, ought to be replaced by a “voluntary civil society characterized by the superiority of its infrastructure, as a type of both public capital and knowledge oriented human capital.” The parliamentary system and majority rule as the main components of the political system in industrial societies ought to be substituted by participatory democracy; the political system should be founded on principles of consensus, participation and synergy that pay regard to the opinions of minorities. All these and even more substantial changes ought to result in a “natural” outgrowth (even imposed by) the development of information technologies. Not much has happened yet to validate Masuda’s computopian view, as he named his “wholly new long-term vision [of a universal opulent society] for the 21st century.”

What seems to me particularly significant is that the main problems Masuda was discussing in *Computopia* concern social communication and participation not as technological but as societal issues. His ideas reflect fundamental assumptions about democratic communication passionately discussed by philosophers and social scientists since the Enlightenment. The essential point is that the ways and possibilities of democratic communication are fundamental to public opinion formation and expression, and to social participation. For three centuries, newspapers and later electronic media were a test case of the possibilities of democratic communication. But it is crucial to observe that the fundamental and complex societal conditions that would allow for the *right* to communicate (or the right to access) were never materialised. There is no reason to disagree with Dewey that there is (still) no way to predict possible ways and degrees of participation of the masses in public opinion processes until “secrecy, prejudice, bias, misrepresentation, and propaganda, as well as sheer ignorance, are replaced by inquiry and publicity” (1927/1991: 209).

Yet is it justifiable to use the term (comp)utopia to depict a future democratic society based on highly developed communication and information technologies? Utopia is often used as a pejorative term, meaning “unrealistic” or “against human nature,” or simply “too idealistic”. Recent discussions of the so-called “end of utopia” misidentify utopia by equating it with totalitarianism, thereby suggesting that the kind of “perfect society” a utopia predicts is beyond human capabilities and, thus, only attainable by the use of force and violence. On the other hand, it is suggested that we are facing “the end of utopia” since “we may be witnessing ... the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government” (Fukuyama, 1989).

Masuda inaccurately named his project *Computopia*. As Marcuse argued, the concept of utopia refers to projects for social change that are considered impossible for two different sets of reasons. The project of a social transformation can be considered unfeasible “because it contradicts certain scientifically established laws, biological laws, physical laws; for example, such projects as the age-old idea of eternal youth or the idea of a return to an alleged golden age” (Marcuse, 1967: 11). But social changes are often considered utopian because “the subjective and objective factors of a given social situation stand in the way of the transformation – the so-called immaturity of the social situation” (ibid: 10). According to Marcuse, we should only speak of utopia in the former sense, i.e. when a project for social change contradicts real laws of nature, whereas the other group of projects, where the impossibility of realisation is due to the lack of appropriate subjective and objective factors, can at best be designated as “provisionally” unfeasible. In this sense, Masuda misnamed his “long-term vision” since his main argument is that “the possibilities of a universally opulent society [are] being realized” (Masuda, 1980/1983: 147).

The question of utopianism in this context is not just an “academic” question. It is primarily an empirical question of whether “all the material and intellectual forces which could be put to work for the realization of a free society

are at hand,” as Marcuse would say. And if they are at hand but the project of social change still can’t materialise, the next question must be: What are the obstacles in existing society that prevent the society from using its own potential for liberation?

I believe the global advance of information and communication technologies makes, and not only from the technological point of view, the “citizen management type of information utility”, including especially public service media, much more readily attainable than any technological solution in the past. And I certainly do not want to believe that we are experiencing the “final form of human government.”

What may be a realistic alternative to a project of social change towards a “citizen management type of information utility”? As Masuda suggested, there may be a considerable danger of moving toward a *controlled society* which advanced communication and information technology renders a perfectly feasible alternative. In a historical perspective what Masuda is suggesting may be conceived as a steady progressive conceptual transition from the idea of representative publicness that dominated until the mid-1980s towards the idea of the *right to communicate* (or right of access) as the normative model that will dominate in the future.

Masuda’s idea of “information utility” as a computer-based public communication infrastructure, closely corresponds with Habermas’ idea of the public sphere as an infrastructure for social integration through public discourse. He defined that as “all those conditions of communication under which there can come into being a discursive formation of opinion and will on the part of a public composed of the citizens of a state” (Habermas, 1992: 446). Masuda’s complex information infrastructure will be, by its very nature, “for the use and benefit of the public,” in which citizens’ participation is essential (Masuda, 1980/1983: 77-8). “Public service” is the first stage of a future development in which information services are provided for the public, similar to the early stage of public service broadcasting, and followed by a far more active involvement of information users as producers so that “the general public [will] become aware of their ability to produce and the value of producing their own information.” This becomes increasingly realistic, provided there is policy support and public service infrastructure to support that. For example, what is today known as “wiki” – a web application designed to allow multiple users to contribute to the website, such as Wikipedia – and similar interactive 2.0 websites such as Facebook and YouTube, demonstrates the idea in practice of a participatory open access platform as the “information utility.” Public service portals *can* represent a premier site for truly emancipatory participation. But it seems that in practice, at least, that model of public service media is so far lagging these challenging participatory ideas and practical innovations.

The substantial problems of either “information utility” or “public sphere” are related to the fundamental conditions of democratic communication. Throughout history the fundamental conditions have *never fully* materialised because of unequal access to communication channels, uneven distribution of commu-

nicative competence, and the reduction of public debates to a legitimisation of dominant opinions created by either the “business type” or the “government type” of power elites. Nevertheless, the discussion of those conditions comes close to “the end of utopia” in the Marcusean sense here at the beginning of the 21st century. The social conditions for the materialisation of this historical project of social change have improved a great deal with no need for any radical changes in the project itself.

In the late eighteenth century, publicness was conceived by Kant (1797/1900) and Bentham (1791/1994) as a general principle that should function as a critical impulse against injustice based on secrecy of state actions, and as an enlightening momentum substantiating the “region of human liberty,” making private citizens equal in the public use of reason (see Splichal, 2002 and 2003). Early debates on freedom of the press critically conceptualised publicness as an extension of personal freedom of thought and expression. Yet with the constitutional guarantee for a free press in parliamentary democracies, discussions on freedom of the press were largely reduced to the pursuit of freedom *by* the media, thus neglecting the idea of publicness as a personal right and the *basis* of democratic citizenship. With discrimination in favor of the power/control function of the press, influenced by Bentham’s ideas of the press and the public as the core of “public opinion tribunal” that exercises control over parliament, the struggle for freedom of the press digressed from the Kantian quest for the public use of reason.

At the end of the nineteenth century this critical stance returned to the field but never became the dominant mode of reasoning about the press and public opinion, or – as we would put it today – about the media and the public sphere. The concepts of public service media and, to a lesser extent, the model of social responsibility of the press which attempted to recuperate these goals in the early 20th century, did not have much success in practice compared with the paternal PSB model and, particularly, the spectacular rise of commercial model.

Early polemics against commodification of the press

Passionate critiques of the moral deterioration of the press and demands for its renewal were augmented when the press developed into “a link in the chain of modern commercial machinery” (Bücher, 1893/1901: 216). Karl Marx was probably the first to argue that the true nature of the press and its freedom should not be confused with the property right since “*the primary freedom of the press is not to be a business*” (1842/1974: 71). While Marx was primarily attentive to the existing political and legal situation in the Prussian State rather than to specific economic conditions needed for a free press to develop, he was aware of the danger whose age was yet to come for the democratic press – the negative consequences of capitalist production guided by the principle of maximisation of profit. With his critique of “commercialisation” of the press and

decay of its freedom to become a skimpy version of entrepreneurial freedom, Marx ingeniously anticipated the development of the press in the second half of the nineteenth century which is characterised by complex “news factories” competing on the press market for mass consumers.

Marx’s critique of subsuming freedom of the press under that of ownership was intellectually much more significant than his exciting polemics against state censorship. In the mid-1800s essays demanding the revocation of licensing and censorship of printing were commonplace, whereas it was quite extraordinary to suggest that the true “revolutionary” interest of the bourgeoisie was not to abolish the non-freedom of the press as a whole but rather to *substitute* one form of non-freedom for another. That amounts to swapping the external non-freedom of censorship, which limits both the right of property in the sphere of the press and freedom of expression, for the internal non-freedom of authors, journalists and editors, which limits the personal right of public reasoning and amounts to an alternate form of censorship.

According to Marx, the bourgeois affirmation of freedom of the press was primarily the affirmation of freedom of enterprise, and actually nothing but freedom of enterprise. As he wrote, one may well understand that some individuals portray freedom in the form best known and closest – and for the bourgeoisie that was the freedom of entrepreneurship. Yet imposing entrepreneurial freedom upon the press in place of freedom of publicity is the same tyranny as subordinating the press to censorship. Censorship has never been a law enacted by the state *for* the citizens but rather *against* them; therefore it is not a law at all but rather a privilege. Attempts to generalize, on the basis of that particular form of paralegal regulation of the press, that market regulation is more democratic than *any* form of legal regulation, as the free market ideologues argued, was a clear example of *non sequitur* for Marx.

He was certainly right in insisting that the subsumption of freedom of the press under the “general freedom” of ownership was a tyranny against the free press that was in the interest of the bourgeois class but not of citizens. Marx drew a strict distinction between freedom of expression and the press, and freedom of ownership. He did this in a way similar to Immanuel Kant’s differentiation between the right of publisher and the right of author. But in contrast to Kant’s *ethical* principle of publicity, Marx (1842; see Splichal, 2003) also demanded *legal* regulation of press freedom. He disagreed with those who objected to any form of legal regulation of the press as supposedly endangering its freedom in the same way as censorship. He argued that “positive law” ensures rather than restrains human freedom as long as it reflects the innate laws and nature of communication. Any legally recognised freedom has to exist as a law. Conversely, the *absence of press legislation* reflects an exclusion of freedom of the press from the general sphere of legal freedom. “Laws are in no way repressive measures against freedom, any more than the law of gravity is a repressive measure against motion” (Marx, 1842: 58). A genuine press law should prevent the press from being degraded to a merely commercial or largely political instrument, and make it serviceable to

the public as “the most general way by which individuals can communicate their intellectual being”.

By the end of the nineteenth century the type of journalism motivated by public interest slowly but surely yielded to the dominant role of money-making journalism. This decisive point in the development of the press was recognised by Carl Bücher in Germany:

The modern newspaper is a capitalistic enterprise, a sort of news-factory in which a great number of people ... are employed on wage, under a single administration, at very specialized work. This paper produces wares for an unknown circle of readers ... The simple needs of the reader or of the circle of patrons no longer determine the quality of these wares; it is now the very complicated conditions of competition in the publication market ... [in which] the newspaper readers take no direct part (Bücher, 1893/1901: 242).

Bücher persistently emphasised in his works the great complexity of the newspaper, seeing it as a primarily cultural phenomenon that emerged as a consequence of political interests in national unification, economic interests in information about events in remote places, and demands for new social and economic relations. Thus, every newspaper need be understood as firmly installed in a broader social context so that in fact “the active, leading elements... are outside of the press rather than in the press. Editors and collaborators have no independent role. They are organs of adaptation (*Anpassungsorgane*). Even if in opposition, they only convey retroactively to governments the counter-currents arising among popular masses against their measures” (1926: 53). The most important and contestable “external element” was, in Bücher’s view, the economic interest in profit making that transformed newspapers from cultural to commercial organisations: “The newspaper is a *business* by its character *producing the advertising space as a commodity that can only be realized through its editorial section*. This is a fundamental transformation of the essence of the newspaper” (Bücher, 1926: 21; emphasis added).

The advertising section of newspapers is “a child of capitalism ... backing in different ways social communication”; among other things, it helps make newspapers less expensive for readers and increases the amount of information gathered by newspapers. Yet this should not prevent us from seeing the drawback of advertising resulting in a “dualism” of the advertising and editorial sections of newspaper and from drawing a clear line between two sections of the press often blurred in practice. Bücher is the entirely overlooked original author of the revolutionary proposition about the true nature of advertising that reappeared much later, with no reference to Bücher, in Melvin DeFleur’s (1966) and Dallas Smythe’s (1981) critical (political-economic) analyses of the role advertising plays in mass communication. It was Bücher’s original idea that with advertising the newspaper “sells news to its readers, and at the same time it *sells its circle of readers to any private interest capable of paying the price*” (1893/1901: 241; emphasis added). This not only makes it more and more

difficult to differentiate between public and private interests in the press, but also makes private interest *prevail* over public interests: "The editorial section is an annoying, expensive element of the organization, and it is carried only because without it there would be no subscribers leading to no advertisers. 'Public interests' are cared for by newspapers only in so far as they do not obstruct the profit motives of publishers" (Bücher, 1922: 12).

Bücher saw the main task of the press in circulating the results of intellectual work in politics, science, arts and technics, which makes it indispensable for public opinion: "The press becomes the *organ* of public opinion if it adopts mental currents rising from the masses, gives them form and direction, and formulates claims on the state authorities on that ground. But it also *influences* public opinion by suggesting a judgment of individuals or entire groups to the mass" (1926: 53). Under the influence of French theorists of mass social phenomena, notably Gustav LeBon (1895/2001) and Gabriel Tarde (1901), Bücher conceived of public opinion as primarily a social psychological phenomenon characterised by a mass (favourable or unfavourable) reaction to certain arrangements, decisions or procedures. Under such circumstances, Bücher warned against the manipulative and demagogic power of newspapers emerging from "the presentation of subjective views and particularistic interests as views and interests of the nation" (Bücher, 1926: 53).

Commercialisation, demagoguery and monopolisation were seen by Bücher as the most harmful threats bringing about press corruption. In his late period the question of how to prevent press corruption and further its cultural and educational mission in society was Bücher's main concern. Following the example of the German socialist Ferdinand Lassalle, who was Marx's collaborator at *Neue rheinische Zeitung* for a short period of time, and similarly to Ferdinand Tönnies, Bücher looked for solution in restrictions and control over advertising and in the division of labor between national and regional press. Similar to the nationalisation of the postal service, telephony and railways, nationalisation of the press should decrease the dependence of the press on commercial interests. Nationwide circulations of large newspaper companies make them strongly dependent on "the capitalist principle of inexpensive mass production," but they were simultaneously becoming a remunerative object of "political, literary and speculative corruption" and "a shelter of an open or hidden advertising" (1926: 52). Thus the most important task of press regulation is to *protect* the public interest and *assure* public control over advertising.

An important part of Bücher's reformist efforts was the education of journalists. He saw the journalistic profession as an amphibian combining characteristics of civil servants and businessmen because newspapers are caught in the relationship between the state and capital. The need for a comprehensive education makes journalists similar to civil servants, while the work in capitalist enterprises links them to the world of business although they don't participate directly in the profit of newspaper companies (1926: 147).

Bücher even drafted a press law to regulate the private and public interests in the press (Hardt, 1979: 115). According to Bücher's design, every German

county with more than 2,500 inhabitants should publish a local newspaper that would be distributed freely among the inhabitants. Only special regional and national newspapers, political papers excluded, would carry advertisements. In order to reduce the production costs of these papers, editorial sections could be produced centrally and delivered to the papers carrying advertising sections. Such a system should open access to quality information and education to all people, Bücher believed, while journalists and editors would only serve the common good but not private commercial interests.

Similarly to Bücher, German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies was critical of the newspaper as “a large capitalist business whose direct and main goal is to create profit in management,” which even journalists simply had to respect (1922: 179-180 & 190-193). He warned of harmful consequences in the profit-seeking operation of newspapers, uncontrolled advertising, and alienated journalists who followed, “like all mercenaries, the flag whose bearer feeds [them] and promises booty.”

Tönnies considered freedom of thought, speech, and press that have been enacted by the bourgeois revolution fundamental to the development of the *Gesellschaft*-type of social structure. The form of communication is essential for his differentiation between community and society. In community, “opinion heritage” is passed along in face-to-face communication from older to younger generations and from higher (predominantly the clergy) to lower strata of society. In society, by contrast, tradition and authority move “from upside down” losing power and giving way to verifiable reason and critique via written communication. Subsequently, the press became more important than oral communication.

Tönnies recognised the potential power of the modern press as a “global” force capable of uniting local and national communities and establishing a world power because the press in:

...its tendencies and potentialities, is definitely international, thus comparable to the power of a permanent or temporary alliance of states. It can, therefore, be conceived as its ultimate aim to abolish the multiplicity of states and substitute for it a single *world republic* in analogy with the world marketplace, which would be ruled by thinkers, scholars, and writers and could dispense with means of coercion other than those of a psychological nature (Tönnies, 1887/1991: 203).

He concluded that recognition of these tendencies which will perhaps never fully materialise nevertheless helps to understand many phenomena of the real world and “to realize the fact that the existence of nation-states is but a transitory restraint of the borderless society” (p. 203) – a global civil society, as we would say today.

The struggle for freedom of thought and press (and other citizen rights) was interpreted by Tönnies as “in its essence an expression of the fight of the new-bourgeois, the national-bourgeois class that positions itself as a ‘public’

– and very often as the ‘people,’ or the ‘nation’ – for power, i.e., first for participation in the power of old estates and the monarchy restraining them, and later increasingly for independent power” (1922: 128). Yet by strengthening the power of the bourgeois class, public opinion has become a kind of “universal good.” The political public once consisting merely of the members of the bourgeois class could not keep out the subordinate class any more; the ruling class could not deny the subordinate class those political and citizen’s rights it obtained for itself, largely in alliance with lower classes, in the revolutionary changes.

The social significance of the press arises from the fact that public opinion is not expressed by a spatially gathered or communicatively interacting public, but only by an imagined or virtual public. Thus, the press should play an important role both as one of the actors in the process of public opinion formation by delivering information to the public, and as the main “expression means” of the public.

In practical terms, however, the ideal “struggle of opinions” in the public arena (e.g., the media) is substituted with a struggle *for* public opinion – i.e., for individuals who will embrace the expressed or published opinion as their own and/or will present it as their own opinion. In contrast to the normatively defined central role of newspapers in his theory of public opinion, Tönnies considered them in practice to be merely (potential) mediators but not an authentic means of opinion expression of the public. Although the press, like parliament, may be normatively considered the most important “organ” of public opinion, it is in practice more often an instrument of influencing rather than expressing public opinion.

While historically the press developed as an instrument of liberal thought, it was soon corrupted by private interests and capital; its transformation into business made it particularly appropriate for “manufacturing public opinion”. Corruption and corporate control have generated prejudiced and biased newspapers so that an “independent newspaper” seemed to be an illusion.

The powers of capital are intent not only to bring about a favorable opinion concerning their products, and unfavorable one concerning those of their competitors, but also to promote a generalized public opinion which is designed to serve their business interests, for instance, regarding a policy of protective tariffs or of free trade, favoring a political movement or party, supporting or opposing an existing government (Tönnies, 1923/1971: 262).

Tönnies vigorously criticised this (mis)use of the press by interest groups, governments, and others, as well as its mode of operation focused on business and profits. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the newspaper industry “liberated” itself from being an organ of public opinion, which served to make clear that the power of the press “is more obvious than the power of public opinion” (1923/1971: 254). Tönnies identified political, economic, and intellectual forces as constituting a new kind of elite standing behind the modern press. Since

“industrial capital” had become a major factor, even more powerful than landed estate, Tönnies argued that it also controlled the power of the press because (1) it reflected the spirit of modernity more directly; (2) it was closely related to the world of information and communication, and national and international politics; (3) because the press itself was a capitalist enterprise based on advertising and (4) “in line with the great body of literature inasmuch as it is carried along by the progress of scientific thinking and stands in the service of a predominantly liberal and religiously as well as politically progressive consciousness” (ibid: 255-256).

The dependence of the press on capital was seen by Tönnies as a major danger in its intellectual deterioration and deviation from representing public opinion and readers’ interests. Because the newspaper as a business relied more heavily on advertisers than on subscribers, press managers and editors had to respect commercial interests and yield to their pressures. The results of such activities may be confusing and misleading to readers. Tönnies warned against the widespread practice of advertising disguised in editorial sections of newspapers and not confined to the business pages. To that he added the general corruption which, as a sign of modern life, had also affected the press. He interpreted examples of corruption in a capitalist press system through monopoly ownership and corporate control as more general expressions of the corruption of public life. Although he acknowledged the work of press critics, he predicted that their independent voices would eventually disappear, or yield to the dictates of conglomerates and monopolies instead of reflecting public opinion, if no radical press reform would take place.

Tönnies listed a number of American sources to support his arguments, among them journalist John Swinton who compared journalists with prostitutes: “We are the tools, and the vassals of rich men behind the scenes. We are jumping jacks. They pull the strings and we dance. Our time, our talents, our lives, our possibilities, all are the property of other men. We are intellectual prostitutes” (Tönnies, 1922: 184). He also referred to sociologist Edward A. Ross who criticised “the newspaper-owner [who] manufactures the impressions that breed opinion and, if he controls a chain of important newspapers, he may virtually make public opinion without the public knowing it” (Ross, 1917-18: 630); and another sociologist, Lester Ward, who called newspapers organs of deception: “Every prominent newspaper is the defender of some interest and everything it says is directly or indirectly (and most effective when indirect) in support of that interest. There is no such thing at the present time as a newspaper that defends a principle” (Tönnies, 1922: 184).

For Tönnies, then, the reform of the press was essential not only for the future of newspapers but also for the future of public opinion as a democratic phenomenon substantiating the nature of *Gesellschaft*. To achieve this greater autonomy of newspapers, Tönnies was convinced of a pressing need for social transformation of the press aimed at its socialisation and legal regulation to secure press autonomy. Following the American sociologist J. W. Jenks, Tönnies believed that “we will never have a newspaper which will report completely

independently about problems of public life unless we have a newspaper that will be independent of circulation and advertising business" (1922: 184).

In 1920s America, Edward C. Hayes demanded that newspapers should give priority to ideas which emerge in a free discussion rather than to monied interests: Newspapers should be forced by law to assign equal space to each of the four parties that were the most powerful in the last elections (Wilson, 1962: 81). Tönnies was particularly impressed by the example of American journalist Ferdinand Hansen, native of Germany, who proposed that the American people establish a \$1 billion fund to create a rigorously regulated independent press system with newspapers that could rely on an independent news service and that were financially free, supported by large circulation rather than by advertising. Tönnies summarised his ideas and suggested that the reform should achieve the following main goals:

- In every city the best instructed and educated men should found a completely independent newspaper;
- All recognized political parties would retain space to introduce and explain events;
- The newspaper should be independent of advertisers; this would be secured by large circulation, since there would be no need for a party press;
- Only trustworthy firms would receive space for advertising;
- Voices of people would find their direct expression in the newspaper;
- Sensationalism would be excluded;
- The major articles would be so unbiased, without passion, and objective so that introduced opinions would be accepted with attention and trust;
- The newspaper should have its own network of correspondents, independent from "the lying wires and poisoned international sources of agencies Reuters, Havas, Northcliffe and the yellow financial-imperialist press," which Tönnies considered "common enemies of humankind" that should be destroyed (1922: 575).

As it is clear from Tönnies' discussion in his *Critique*, ideas similar to Hansen's proposal for press reform adopted by Tönnies were widely resounding in the early twentieth century, and perhaps more in the United States than in Europe. Tönnies considered these suggestions significant for Europe and Germany, too, as he supported Wilhelm Bauer's appeals to stop sensationalism and the violation of "the sanctity of private life" (Bauer, 1914).

Both Bücher and Tönnies believed that the press should remain a genuine "organ of public opinion," which may only be possible if it is organised or regulated as a public good or public service. To that end, they promoted a

variety of practical regulatory measures to secure the professional autonomy of the press, particularly in relation to political parties and business, and readers' participation in newspaper production. However, the historical conditions in the late 1800s and early 1900s were not in favour of such regulatory measures because the press was already largely organised as a private property and operated as a private enterprise. Tönnies' dark scenario prevailed and democratic principles did not triumph in the development of the press; the superiority of the private property right was insuperable. The only significant exception from commercial determinism came about with the public service model of broadcasting which was never applied to the press, and is now itself apparently under renewed stress in the transition to public service media. The issues and the concerns surrounding them remain as vital as ever. The more things have changed the more the essential dynamics have remained the same.

The public/private distinction

Bücher and Tönnies not only call critical attention to negative trends in the press and its social context that are relevant today, but also emphasise the decisive role of journalists and public opinion as the key factors to secure reform. Such a firm belief in public opinion as a historical, even revolutionary, social will and power that could substantially transform the nature of the press can be partly traced to Immanuel Kant (1897/1990: 183-4) with his influential example of the hereditary privileges of the church. He stated that the foundation of such privileges "lay only in the *opinion of the people*, and it can be valid only so long as this opinion lasts. As soon as this *public opinion* in favor of such institutions dies out... the putative proprietorship in question must cease" (emphasis added). An autonomous, objective, and trustworthy press as an organ of public opinion produced not only by its own staff and correspondents but also directly by the public ("voices of people") in which journalists and editors would serve the common good but not particularistic commercial or political interests, represents an ideal-type of construct in Tönnies' normative theory.

Ideas about public service broadcasting discussed among critical scholars in the late 20th century demonstrate that the public/private distinction implied in Bücher's and Tönnies' ideas of socialisation of the press remain as valuable today as in the past, and serve to substantiate the concept of "public service broadcasting" despite the fact that even in radio regulatory debates in the late 1920s there were no references to their ideas. Such thinking was by then part of the intellectual repertoire of the day. A rather clear echo comes across in a modernised version of the definition of public service broadcasting adopted by UNESCO:

Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) is broadcasting made for the public and financed and controlled by the public. It is neither commercial nor state-owned. It is free from political interference and pressure from commercial

forces. Through PSB, citizens are informed, educated, and also entertained. When guaranteed with pluralism, programming diversity, editorial independence, appropriate funding, accountability and transparency, public service broadcasting can serve as a cornerstone of democracy.¹

As good as it is, this definition fails to recognise the importance of the “direct expression of people’s voices” in the media, which Tönnies proposed as a solution to the increasing dependence of the press on particularistic commercial and political interests that privilege private interests over and even against public ones. He never argued for the “right to communicate” (or the right of access), but his ideas about press reform come close to arguments supporting that as a fundamental civil right. Critics of the moral decline of the press in the late 1800s and early 1900s are strikingly contemporary in arguing not only for an independent press but also for autonomous individuals.

Paddy Scannell (1992: 317) suggested that “If broadcasting today is defensible as a public service it can only be as a service to the public.” But is this rather abstract requirement a sufficient condition? Certainly every public service is related to human rights, which suggests certain material and spiritual goods and services are fundamental for human (and humane) existence, and therefore should be universally provided. What about private commercial broadcasting – does it supply any *service to the public*? It must, but how and what exactly? Are there any media, print or broadcast, without *any service* and thus of no precise use value to *the public*? These are difficult questions to answer. And there are questions still more complicated. Is there only one public? What is “the public”, in singular or plural, to which a service is supplied by the media? What diverse relationships can be established between the media and the public(s)? Table 1 illustrates the complexity of dimensions relevant for any useful definition of public service media in general, which, as argued throughout this chapter, were already thought of *in situ* by Bücher and, particularly, Tönnies.

As a matter of principle, public service media are not defensible as just *any* kind of service to the public. Bücher and Tönnies had specific ideas about what kinds of services the press as an organ of public opinion should provide to its readers. One may disagree with the concrete features they drafted for press reform, but that should not blind us to their general idea that reform must not only help ensure the right to express ideas free of political and commercial pressures – protecting primarily journalists – but also create *opportunities* for expression, thus helping “people’s voices” to resound in the public sphere.

This is where the specific idea of public service in the sphere of (mass) communication substantially diverges from the idea of public service in a far more general sense, as for example in healthcare or utilities. The general idea of public service highlights the principle of equal access to consumption of services or goods without any reference to the need of *publicity* in particular. The case of public service media is different here. The media should be considered guardians of the principle of publicity in modern societies and this principle is central in the concept of public service media. Indeed, *the unique*

Table 1. Normative models of media regulation

	System of media regulation		
	Authoritarian	Commercial	Public service
Freedom of publication institutionalized as	Representative publicness	Press freedom	Right to communicate
Preferred status of freedom of expression	Authoritative privilege	Subordinated to property right	Natural right, civil right
Privileged type of discourse	Strategic (Advocacy & Propaganda)	Strategic (Watchdog*)	Communicative (Public use of reason)
Dominant form of social relationship	Conflict (Coercion)	Competition (Market)	Co-operation (Association)
Organizing principle in society	Integration of powers	Separation of powers	Division of labor
Dominant form of media regulation	Political (Censorship)	Commerical, Legal/Judicial	Ethical ("Public service")
Access to public communication	Status-restricted	Property-restricted	Open

Note: The so-called paternal media system is considered a special (benign) form of the authoritarian system. Williams defines a paternal media system as an "authoritarian system with a conscience" (1976: 131). In terms of its fundamental principles, it is not a system *sui generis*.

feature of the idea of public service broadcasting, historically, and public service media, today, is the reference to the principle of publicity.

The specificity of genuine public service media could thus be defined with reference to two related issues: (1) the nature of contents produced and publicised (broadcast) by the media, and (2) the constitution of "the public" which ought to use public service media as its "organs." Traditional (paternal) definitions of public service broadcasting refer to the first issue but completely neglect the second. They emphasise a national provision of a wide variety of contents, i.e. universal availability in terms of technical and financial access, and contents. The audience is heterogeneous and dispersed but not stratified in different classes in terms of their social status, taste, or political leaning, in contrast for example to social differences maintained in cultural tastes.²

The type of "rational" publicness that developed with newspapers and the reading publics cannot be compared with the kind of publicness that emerged with television and the viewing publics. Television brought about a new type, at least a new dimension, of publicness: direct visibility. It also constructed a new type of public: "the general audience." The availability of broadcasting to almost the entire population of a nation-state (at least in the most developed countries of the time) radically changed the character of publicness not only because of the (re)introduction of the visual dimension, but also because it

widened the notion of “public interest” via the deliberate inclusion of ordinary people into the public domain. The nineteenth-century press never succeeded in achieving such a broad readership, although the “penny press” or “yellow press” made newspapers financially affordable by common people in the mid-nineteenth-century USA.

But it’s important to be clear in understanding that these technologically driven changes do not radically challenge the historical roots of public service as an ideal. Modern technologies do not challenge the unique nature and importance of communication for individuals and society, which justifies or even requires a kind of authoritative “interference” with the media. Those admitting the need for such an interference widely disagree on the grounds for interference, i.e. should it be public (e.g. constitutional, legal) or not; should it prevent (at least some of) the media from serving only particularistic lucrative interests or allow them to be profitable, etc. But they consistently realise that all forms of human communication that are relevant for citizen rights and democratic *freedoms must be guaranteed* by some means. That is not really in question, I think; at question is the how.

Attempts to institutionally regulate human communication are older than those which try to understand and theorise its human nature and “inherent laws.” While the former date back at least to the invention of writing technology, the latter were invigorated only by the project of Enlightenment a few hundred years ago (although I suppose one could argue that in a sense Plato’s and Aristotle’s discussions of rhetoric represent the beginning of such efforts). Nevertheless, one must accommodate the fact that communication has never been regulation-free. In principle freedom of communication has always existed, but never really for everyone. “Freedom of the press” acquired a conventional sense of privilege of those using private means of communication to “serve the public.” Two alternative types of regulation may be identified: communication (media) can be regulated (1) as a form of action based on the (private) property right, or (2) as genuine communicative action based on its inner (communication) laws.

Early radical critiques of the commercialisation and politicisation of the press, as we have seen, considered socialisation of the press a fundamental condition and really the *only* way to liberate it from subordination to the state, political parties and, particularly, commodity production. They related ideas about press reform that would establish the press as public service to the “extension” of personal freedom for expression as necessary to the democratisation of society. That would make the press a matter of genuine common concern and decision making. But the early critiques also realise that reforms could not be limited to questions about the political and economic (in)dependence of the press because the genuine socialisation of communication activity stands or falls in solidarity with the universal democratisation of social relations. This substantially affects all forms of human communication. Critical claims were not related to ideal communication acts supposedly good in themselves but opposed to reality. Rather they were fueled by what it was clearly already

time to do in light of existing and practical conditions. Although such attempts have been often ridiculed not only as non-productive but also utopian by opponents, in fact they are productive in a fundamental sense: They “construe” facts that materially do not yet exist but have ample potential to exist. They moreover confront barriers that do not allow for their practical materialisation to come into existence.

These radical ideas should not be demoralised simply because public service clearly failed in the field of the press even if newspapers were constitutive of the bourgeois public sphere emerging in the seventeenth century. The idea of the “public service press” emerged rather late; it was actually behind the times since newspapers had already become powerful economic players and no social force or political actor existed that was influential enough to successfully limit (and enforce) their power at that time. Newspaper owners ideologically legitimised the renunciation of such ideas by denoting them as attacks on the “freedom of the press.”

Despite the formidable growth of the press in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, public *space* remained essentially unchanged until the development of broadcasting. It consisted of saloons, coffeehouses, universities, parks, squares, parliaments, theatres, and stadiums bringing together, occasionally, a limited number and types of people who witnessed an event or, less often, took an active part in something. The press has been constitutive of the public and the public sphere but it was not technically equipped to widen access to public events. Newspapers could not make readers eyewitnesses of events. It was equipped in principle to incorporate the public in its own production via active participation, but these opportunities were largely restricted to political, economic and intellectual elites. Only radio and later television erased the spatial restrictions of access to “public events” and made events universally visible, which made their protagonists increasingly famed and popular.

The nature of participation of audiences in these events changed with broadcasting *despite* the fact that even in the “authentic” events at public places audiences largely remained passive. Whereas the audience in a public space such as a theatre had to conform to specific rules regarding *public* behaviour that are valid for that location and in that event, the dispersed mass audience in front of television screens in their private homes follow norms of *private* behaviour. Could anyone imagine that television viewers at home would stand and salute when the national anthem is played or the flag is displayed? Or that they would stand and applaud actors at the end of a performance? It is even more than that: Public events (co)produced by broadcasters are staged in ways that correspond to the domain requirements of the private settings of their viewers who sit comfortably and negligently in front of their TV screens.

Contemporary attempts to disavow the ideas of public service broadcasting are not surprising. They are echoed in ideas about press reform a hundred years ago, and resisted now as then as attacks on “freedom of the press.” *Public service broadcasting* was empirically conceived in early twentieth-century Europe as a paternal nation building “service” or as a system with a cultural mission

(Jauert & Lowe, 2005) in order to defend it against commercial pressures, but also in contrast with how critical sociologists saw the need to re-regulate the press a few decades earlier (e.g., they were not preoccupied with the fear of abuse of the press by non-democratic movements or governments). Despite those efforts, commercialisation and fragmentation that first occurred in the newspapers in the nineteenth century, and which caught the attention of critical scholars of the time, soon prevailed also in broadcasting, particularly with the development of television. These processes seem natural only as long as we do not see that subordinating the right to communicate to the property right and commercial freedom is *a choice* to privilege private property rights over *civil* property rights.

In normative terms, public service media must be a service *of* the public, *by* the public, and *for* the public. It is a service *of* the public because it is financed by it and should be owned by it. It ought to be a service *by* the public – not only financed and controlled, but also produced by it. It must be a service *for* the public – but also for the government and other powers acting in the public sphere. In sum, public service media ought to become “a cornerstone of democracy.”

Notes

1. UNESCO. Available at: http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=1525&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html
2. Scannell (1992: 337) rightly points to a shortfall in Bourdieu's empirical researches of cultural tastes, which do not include radio and television – “because the social distinctions maintained by the cultural distinctions of particular taste publics collapse in the common cultural domain of broadcasting.”

References

- Bauer, W. (1914) *Die öffentliche Meinung und ihre Geschichtlichen Grundlagen*. Tübingen, Germany: J.C.B. Mohr.
- Bentham, J. (originally 1791; 1994) Of Publicity. *Public Culture* 6(3), pp.581-595.
- Bentham, J. (1820) *To the Spanish People, Letter I* (available at <http://www.la.utexas.edu/research/poltheory/bentham/bsp/bsp.l01.html>)
- Bücher, K. (1926) *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Zeitungskunde*. Tübingen, Germany: Laupp'sche Buchhandlung.
- Bücher, K. (1922) *Zur Frage der Pressereform*. Tübingen, Germany: J. C. B. Mohr.
- Bücher K. (1893/1901) *Industrial Revolution*. New York: Henry Holt.
- DeFleur, M.L. (1966) *Theories of Mass Communication*. New York: David McKay Company.
- Dewey, J. (1927/1991). *The Public and Its Problems*. Athens: Swallow.
- Fukuyama, F. (1989) The End of History? *The National Interest*, Summer.

Acknowledgement

The text greatly benefited from thoughtful comments by Greg Lowe and Jo Bardoel on the draft version.

- Habermas, J. (1992) Further Reflections on the Public Sphere. In Calhoun, C. (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Hardt, H. (1979) *Social Theories of the Press*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Kant, I. (1897/1990) *Die Metaphysik der Sitten*. Stuttgart: Reclam.
- Jauert, P. and Lowe, G.F. (2005) Public Service Broadcasting for Social and Cultural Citizenship. In Lowe, G.F. and Jauert, P. (eds.), *Cultural Dilemmas in Public Service Broadcasting*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- LeBon, G. (1895/2001) *The Crowd: A Study of Popular Mind*. Kitchener, Ont.: Batoche.
- Marcuse, H. (1967) *Das Ende der Utopie und Das Problem der Gewalt*. Berlin: Verlag Peter von Maikowski.
- Marx, K. (1842/1974) Die Verhandlungen des 6. Rheinischen Landtags. Debatten über Pressfreiheit und Publikation der landständischen Verhandlungen. In *Marx-Engels Werke*, 1: 28-77. Berlin: Dietz Verlag.
- Masuda, Y. (1980/1983) *The Information Society as Post-industrial Society*. Washington, D.C.: World Future Society.
- Peucer, T. (1690) *Über Zeitungsberichte*. Leipzig: Wittegau.
- Ross, E.A. (1917-18) Social Decadence. *American Journal of Sociology*, 23, 620-632.
- Rousseau, J.J. (1750) *Whether the Re-establishment of Arts and Sciences Has Contributed to the Refining of Manners*. Available at: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/history/courses/europe1/weeks/rou1.htm>.
- Scannell, P. (1992) Public Service Broadcasting and Modern Public Life. In Scannell, P., Schlesinger, P. and Sparks, C. (eds.) *Culture and Power*. London: Sage.
- Smythe, D.W. (1981) *Dependency Road: Communications, Capitalism, Consciousness and Canada*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Splichal, S. (2003) Bentham, Kant, and the Right to Communicate. *Critical Review* 15, 3-4, 285-305.
- Splichal, S. (2002) *Principles of Publicity and Press Freedom*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Tarde, G. (1901) *L'opinion et la foule*. Available at: <http://bibliotheque.uqac.quebec.ca/index.htm>.
- Tönnies, F. (1923/1971) *Ferdinand Tönnies – On Sociology: Pure, Applied, and Empirical*. In Cahnman, W.J. and Heberle, R. (eds.) Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Translation of the article "Macht und Wert der Öffentlichen Meinung," *Die Dioskuren: Jahrbuch für Geisteswissenschaften* 1923, 2, 72-95).
- Tönnies, F. (1887/1991). *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- Tönnies, F. (1922) *Kritik der öffentlichen Meinung*. Berlin: Julius Springer.
- Wilson, F.G. (1962) *A Theory of Public Opinion*. Chicago: Henry Regnery.
- Williams, R. (1976) *Communications*. 3rd ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Author Biographies

JOHANNES (JO) L.H. BARDOEL (Ph.D. 1997 University of Amsterdam) is Endowed Professor of Media Policy with the Radboud University of Nijmegen and a Senior Researcher with the Amsterdam School of Communications Research (ASCoR) at the University of Amsterdam. Previously, he worked for the NOS (now NPO, Netherlands Public Broadcasting) Board of Governors for 15 years.

STEVEN BARNETT (M.A. 1975 University of Cambridge, M.Sc. 1978 London School of Economics) is Professor of Communications at the University of Westminster. He writes frequently for the national and specialist press on broadcasting issues in the UK and serves on the Editorial Board of the British Journalism Review. He is currently Special Advisor to a House of Lords committee enquiry into news and media ownership. He is the author or co-author of books that include *The Battle for the BBC* (1995) and *Westminster Tales: The 21st Century Crisis in Political Journalism* (2001).

HANNE BRUUN (Ph.D. 1998 University of Aarhus) is Associate Professor in the Department of Information and Media Studies at University of Aarhus, Denmark. She has published *Talkshowet – Portræt af en TV-genre* (1999) and *Daytime Talkshows i Danmark* (2004), and has been the editor of several books including the latest: *TV-produktion – Nye Vilkår* (2007). She has contributed to *Dansk TV's Historie* (2006), as well.

IRENE COSTERA MEIJER (Ph.D. University of Utrecht 1996) is Professor of Journalism at the Free University of Amsterdam. She also holds a professorship at the School of Media in Zwolle, where she directs the research group 'Media and Civil Society'. During the last ten years she has conducted several large-scale research projects commissioned by Dutch Public Broadcasters, NPO.

KAROL JAKUBOWICZ (Ph.D. 1989 University of Warsaw) is a member of the Intergovernmental Council of the UNESCO Information for All programme and heads Working Group 2 of the COST A30 ACTION "East of West: Setting a New Central and Eastern European Media Research Agenda" of the European Science Foundation. He was Director, Strategy and Analysis Department for the National Broadcasting Council of Poland, the broadcasting regulatory authority (2004-2006). He has been Vice-President, Television, Polish Radio and Television; Chairman, Supervisory Board, Polish Television; and Head of Strategic Planning and Development at Polish Television. He has been active

in the Council of Europe, in part as Chairman of the Committee of Experts on Media Concentrations and Pluralism; Chairman of the Standing Committee on Transfrontier Television; and Chairman of the Steering Committee on the Media and New Communication Services (2005-2006).

YNGVAR KJUS (M.A. 2004 University of Oslo) is a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Film and Television Production Studies at Lillehammer University College in Norway. He is also Advisor at the Department of Market and Communication in NRK, the Norwegian public service broadcasting company.

ANDRA LEURDIJK (Ph.D. 1999 University of Amsterdam) is Senior Researcher and Consultant at the Dutch Institute for Applied Research, TNO Information and Communication Technology. She has worked for the Media Department of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and as a Lecturer at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam and at the University of Amsterdam.

GREGORY FERRELL LOWE (Ph.D. 1992 University of Texas at Austin) is Senior Advisor at YLE Strategy and Development in Finland, and Docent in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Tampere. He earlier served as Head of YLE Programme Development and is a consultant for the Council of Europe.

MIRKO LUKÁCS (M.A. 1991 University of Amsterdam) is Manager of strategy and program services at the Dutch educational broadcasting foundation Teleac/NOT. Prior to that, he was Director of the European Services Expertise Centre of IDC, an ICT market research and consulting firm. He graduated in Communication Science (Media Policy).

BRIAN McNAIR (Ph.D. 1987 University of Glasgow) is Professor of Journalism and Communication at the University of Strathclyde, Scotland. He is the author of *News & Journalism In the UK* (4th edition, 2003), *Journalism and Democracy* (2000) and *Cultural Chaos: Journalism, News and Power in a Globalised World* (2006).

HALLVARD MOE (M.A. 2002 University of Bergen) is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Information Science and Media Studies at the University of Bergen, Norway.

TEEMU PALOKANGAS (M.Soc.Sc. 2003 University of Tampere) is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Tampere, Finland. He has previously worked for YLE, the Finnish public service broadcasting company, as a current affairs journalist and as a market analyst in programme development (YLEdge).

PHILIP SAVAGE (Ph.D. 2006, York University) is Assistant Professor in the Communication Studies and Multimedia Department at McMaster University, Canada. He worked at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation from 1989-2005 as Head of Research (Radio) and Senior Manager of Planning and Regulatory Affairs (Television, New Media and Radio). He consults on broadcasting and

new media for the Canadian Commissioner of Official Languages and the Canadian Media Research Consortium (CMRC).

SLAVKO SPLICHAL (Ph.D. 1979 University of Ljubljana) is Professor of Communication in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. He is an Associate Member of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Director of the European Institute for Communication and Culture, and editor of its journal *Javnost-The Public*.

RICHARD VAN DER WURFF (Ph.D. 1997 University of Amsterdam) is Associate Professor in the Department of Communications at The Amsterdam School of Communications Research (ASCoR), University of Amsterdam.

The core challenge facing public service broadcasting today is the transition to public service media. This understanding characterised discourse among participants in the RIPE@2006 conference in the Netherlands, the theme of which was Public Service Broadcasting in the Multimedia Environment: Programmes and Platforms. The contributors in this volume focus attention on issues of strategic concern and tactical importance in addressing the core challenge. A defining theme is the need for moving beyond the transmission model of broadcasting to mature both professional and theoretical thinking necessary in public service communication. Audiences must be understood as partners rather than targets and content that is cross-media and cross-genre must be popular but remain distinctive. For policy makers the core challenge necessitates fairly balancing the often contrary interests of commerce and culture which is a fundamental tension in media policy today. The stakes are high because policy and operational decisions will establish the character of the European dual media system for decades to come. What is the mission of public service media in a multimedia environment characterised by globalization, convergence, digitization, and fragmentation? What is important for strategy development that renews the public service enterprise while keeping faith with the ethos that legitimates the endeavour? How might policy makers variously understand the fuller possibilities entailed in the development of a uniquely European dual media system?

The authors address these questions to offer critical insights that deepen thinking about theoretical, strategic and operational aspects incumbent in the transition to PSM. The book has two sections. The first is focussed on dynamics, complications and challenges incumbent in policy development and strategy elaboration. The second focuses on content-related aspects with emphasis on strategic and tactical implications.

NORDICOM

Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research

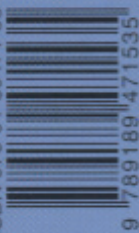
Göteborg University
Box 713, SE 405 30 Göteborg, Sweden
Telephone +46 31 786 00 00 (op.)
Fax +46 31 786 46 55

E-mail: info@nordicom.gu.se

www.nordicom.gu.se

ISBN 978-91-89471-53-5

ISBN 978-91-89471-53-5



norden



GÖTEBORG
UNIVERSITY