

Broadcasting & Convergence: New Articulations of the Public Service Remit

Gregory Ferrell Lowe
& Taisto Hujanen (eds.)

RIPE@2003

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NORDICOM

Göteborg University, Box 713, SE 405 30 Göteborg
Phone: 031/773 10 00 (vx) Fax: 031/773 46 55
E-mail: nordicom@nordicom.gu.se

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Preface

This book grew out of the RIPE@2002 conference about broadcasting and convergence organised jointly by the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Tampere, and Yleisradio [YLE], the Finnish Public Broadcasting Company. The 2002 conference materials may be reviewed at: www.yle.fi/keto/ripe.

Re-Visionary Interpretations of the Public Enterprise [RIPE] is an initiative to strengthen collaborative relations between media scholars and practitioners. The focus of this initiative is the contemporary relevance of the remit for public service broadcasting, and public service media more generally.

The participants in the 2002 conference express appreciation to the Academy of Finland [in relation to the project *Changing Media, Changing Europe*, under the auspices of the European Science Foundation] to YLE's Office for Corporate Development (YLE Kehitystoiminta) for the sponsorship and support.

The RIPE@2002 conference greatly benefited from the work of the Conference Planning Group and their sponsoring universities: Jo Bardoel (University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands), John Jackson (Concordia University, Canada), Per Jauert (University of Aarhus, Denmark), Henrik Søndergaard (University of Copenhagen, Denmark) and Alan G. Stavitsky (University of Oregon, USA). On behalf of the entire Conference Planning Group, we wish to thank so many colleagues and friends that contributed papers and presentations in the 2002 conference.

The editors extend warm thanks and best regards to the authors for their contributions to this volume. This book is the fruit of their respective and collective good work, and we certainly appreciate your patience, encouragement and unwavering support.

Finally, we are pleased to announce the RIPE@2004 conference that will take place in Denmark and is being co-sponsored by the University of Aarhus and Denmark's Radio [DR]: *Mission, Market and Money: Public Service Media and the Cultural Commons*.

Helsinki and Tampere in May, 2003

Gregory Ferrell Lowe

Taisto Hujanen

Broadcasting and Convergence

Rearticulating the Future Past

Taisto Hujanen & Gregory Ferrell Lowe

Since the telegraph was invented in the 19th Century, each successive advance in media technology has featured a “rhetoric of the electronic sublime” (Carey & Quirk, 1989). Thus it isn’t surprising that so much of what passes as public debate about convergence, especially in media policy discourse, again promises the eventual achievement of a familiar prediction: the realization of some technological utopia. In this most recent rhetorical iteration, convergence is the premise, digitization is the platform, but as always *utopia remains the promise*.

In the broadest sense, convergence refers to processes of transformation that impact entire societies. As Briggs and Burke (2002) demonstrate, that understanding is much older than the present technology orientation. A broader understanding is represented, for example, in cultural studies theory addressing ‘hybridization, intertextuality, intermediality and multimodality.’ Each represents some thread of convergence process of importance for media culture.

But as Briggs and Burke (ibid: 266) further observe, since the 1990s the notion has mainly been applied to describe digital integration. That is the governing construct for multimedia, but would also include what Alm and Lowe (2001) treat more expansively as ‘polymedia’. In this narrower sense, convergence celebrates the rapid pace of innovation and integration as computing, telecommunications, broadcast and print media are merged into increasingly common digitally-based and digitally-encoded techniques (Dutton, 1996).

As always, what is most important for societies and cultures is not the technology per se but the consequences of application. Convergence is a complex construct affecting much more than the mutual identities of different media; it is crucially about legitimating their social and political roles in relation to everyday uses (the chapter by Raudaskoski & Rasmussen offers pertinent discussion). That is already evident when assessing organization and institutional forms of media operation, especially in corporate restructuring and the consolidation of media systems (Murdock, 2000).

Will broadcasting survive convergence, and should it survive? If yes, why and in what form? Those questions were fundamental to deliberations in the RIPE@2002 conference that laid the groundwork for this book, and remain animate concerns in much of the content that follows (1). The questions can only be answered in some context, and for our purposes the context has three dimensions.

First, in various ways this book highlights the importance of broadcasting as a *utilization of resource*. Broadcasting uses electromagnetic spectrum and, despite claims to the contrary, that is a finite natural resource that must be somehow managed in the public interest. Second, this book variously highlights the importance of broadcasting in *social application*. Any robust understanding requires taking account of the media-society histories that define what broadcasting means and is supposed to do in situated contexts. Third, this book variously highlights the significance of broadcasting in *comparative cultural contexts*. The legitimacy of what broadcasting is supposed to be, and subsequently how it ought to be organized and operated, relies on normative judgements informed by cultural values. These dimensions are essential for excavating shared concerns about the future of broadcasting in consideration of convergence dynamics.

In this introductory chapter we have selected not to focus our treatment tightly on the public service remit because the summative contents of the various chapters that follow treat the topic in considerable detail and from many relevant angles. Instead, we seek to contribute an essay that may help to frame an abiding conviction that broadcasting must not be marginalized in the convergence debate. Thus, our contribution reviews historic principles as a platform for discussion about broadcasting – aspects that are of continuing relevance for any consideration of its social applications and cultural implications.

Media scholarship doesn't have to be in a hurry. Theory develops slowly and assessment takes time. In a sense, scholars can 'afford' to wait and see. But broadcasters must often define operational strategies and launch before they can actually know what convergence is all about, and with what effects. They rely on past experience and, in view of their own and other actors' (including scholars) projections of the future, they act (the chapters by Steemers and also Alm & Lowe, address such issues from varying perspectives). But at the same time (as discussed in Born's chapter in relation to the UK), broadcasters' projections contribute to constructing the future. They are not 'accidental tourists' in these processes, and thus ultimately cannot evade responsibility for choices that shape the future.

The launch of digital terrestrial television [DTT] in Finland offers a recent example of what can happen when broadcasters' projections are unrealistic. The initial campaign for DTT (introduced in 2001) failed for at least two reasons. First, because the broadcasting industry and the electronic industry envisioned different projections concerning the pace of digital diffusion. Finland had DTT channels when few people were able to watch because

the set-top boxes needed for digital reception on analogue devices were unavailable. And, secondly, because the initial campaign focused too much on DTT as 'enhanced television' which didn't correspond to the technical capacity of first generation set-top boxes (Theodoropoulou's chapter is also relevant here).

As to the question of 'survival', the Finnish case in DTT paints a pessimistic view regarding the future of broadcasting. In Finland, policy has driven the digitization of broadcasting in the public sector because that has been explicitly connected with building the so-called Information Society. Digital television was projected in policy discourse as a multimedia platform for each Finnish home. Thus, whether something survives depends a great deal on how it is defined, and especially on the degree to which it is defined in similar terms by different agencies (for a broader treatment, see the chapter by Thomass).

When thinking about broadcasting more fundamentally – primarily as one-to-many media that harness electromagnetic spectrum for wireless, terrestrial transmission and reception – it's useful to begin with discussion about utilization of the resource on which that depends.

Broadcasting as a utilization of resource

The electromagnetic spectrum is not a man-made property but rather a phenomenon of nature. With cumulative development in 20th Century technology, humanity enjoys capabilities to use an expansive range of spectrum frequencies harnessed to facilitate radio, television, satellites, x-rays, lasers and so forth. The history of modern civilization owes something to successive advances in our capability to use more frequencies for varied and improved communication. Such advances account for a dramatic multiplication of communication patterns, practices and channels.

But the electromagnetic spectrum is not growing. The spectrum is immense, but quite finite. Actually, limitations fertilized media technology invention in the 20th Century because advances were frequently made when figuring out ways to work in, on and without spectrum space. To accommodate a growing variety of applications, humans have had to learn to use more of the spectrum, and to use each 'bandwidth' of spectrum space with increasing efficiency, because the need, desire and possibilities for spectrum application continually expand. We need radio telescopes to map the heavens and satellite surveillance to map the earth. We want more to see on television and to have more flexibility in where and how we use telephones. We are excited by the newest possibilities that digitization opens for recombinant media and more personalized involvement.

This period is watermarked by the indelible influences of creative hybrids and recombinant innovation. It is undeniably innovative because so much

of what is new and influential appears as fresh combinations of known formulas and tools. Web content is increasingly financed by advertising strategies that are nearly identical to the newspaper model, but also by subscription strategies similar to pay-TV via satellite and cable channels. Similarly, public institutions are increasingly organized and operated as though they were private companies, a growing number of which also have commercial subsidiaries with managers busily absorbed in learning about markets and marketing.

In this context, attacks on broadcasting frequently imply 'retro' flavors. There is an idea that broadcasting is 'over the hill' and 'out of step' with modern fashions. It's akin to the gleaming chrome expanse of a 1950s automobile – nostalgic perhaps, but anyway antiquated. It isn't considered sleek, compact or aerodynamic; it's criticized as being big, inefficient and difficult to maneuver.

What accounts for the implied 'bad' reputation of broadcasting? One could start with its definition as a media technology in application. The following is borrowed from a key-word book from the late 1980s, reflecting the British cultural studies approach to media scholarship. The definition highlights what has been considered bothersome about broadcasting, positioned in explicit contrast to 'narrowcasting,' participatory approaches enthusiastically greeted by cultural studies.

Broadcasting:

The sending of messages via the media of TV or radio with *no technical control* over who receives them. *Anyone* who has the appropriate receiver and is within the range of the transmitter can receive them. (Contrast with narrowcasting). By extension it means sending messages via the airwaves to a *mass audience*, and thus involves the use of broadcast codes and conventions designed to appeal to that mass audience (O'Sullivan et al., 1987; italics by TH & GL).

This definition emphasizes the technical characteristics of broadcasting, that is the use of electromagnetic radio waves for transmitting messages. Although implied as such, lacking technical control over reception is not necessarily detrimental. That lack accounts in part for requirements to provide free-to-air and open access to broadcast signals; it is the technical basis for universalism in broadcasting. Moreover, as van Cuilenburg and McQuail (1998: 77) suggest, control of access is a critical concern in today's converging media environment because the absence of any similar standardization long requisite for analogue broadcasting threatens open access to digital broadcast signals (see the chapter by Näränen for more).

The definition also implies that technology as such does not determine social use, which is exactly right. Electromagnetic spectrum has long been used to facilitate communication. Harnessing the resource for broadcasting that transmits messages to a *mass audience* is one useful application, but as

indicated narrowcasting is another – and one could add mobile phones for that matter. This illustrates that the same resource can be used for more targeted forms of communication via transmission. Of course it remains an open question as to how big an audience would need to be to qualify as a ‘mass’ and whether, at any size, that is somehow inherently a bad thing.

There are technical and historical reasons to define the people receiving broadcast signals as a ‘mass audience,’ if one is only discussing scale (cf. Lewis, 1991). Due to the nature of the technical platform and the attributes of its use in broadcasting, the source has only very limited control of audience behaviors. For a long time, then, broadcasters knew little about their audience and, as advocates of narrowcasting argued, too often seemed not to even care (Ang, 1991). But the situation is quite different today because broadcasters and sister industries have developed elaborate and increasingly sophisticated tools for knowing, and research results are taken seriously (cf. Stavitsky, 1995; Schulz, 2000). One can hardly argue today that audience is an undefined mass for broadcasters. There are, in other words, good reasons to re-articulate the notion of a mass in relation to broadcasting audiences.

This was highlighted by one of the four work groups participating in the RIPE@2002 conference. Colleagues suggested the ‘broad’ aspects of broadcasting should be featured more prominently instead of dismissed out of hand. Broadcasting is a means for communication with broad audiences, and the most immediate means at that. This characteristic of being ‘broad’ is not only about size but, significantly, also the diversity of broadcast audiences. It emphasizes the ability of broadcasting to *connect* people across geographical, social and cultural borders in a public life that can be *shared* as a result.

With that in mind, the semantic also signals a second crucial aspect of universalism, this time keyed to broadcast content. Because the casting is broad, makers must search out differences in opinions and interests, and then seek to portray this variety fairly and also as comprehensively as practically possible. At the same time, they must work to create opportunities for cultural self-expression, and thereby assist individuals and groups in their respective efforts to negotiate identities. Because broadcasting utilizes a public resource, it is supposed to do these things in ways that emphasize possibilities for enhancing mutual understanding and interaction between different kinds of people. That is in fact the operational fulcrum for pluralism in broadcasting.

And yet in so much of the digital vision animating future think today, broadcasting is mainly construed as unidirectional communication that is altogether inferior to the presumed interactivity of ‘new’ media. But any fair-minded critic must acknowledge that in the history of broadcasting those absent technical possibilities for immediate feedback do not mean broadcasters have acted independently of their audiences, much less of social and political environments. In the European broadcasting tradition, the feedback system has been typically of a political character. Parliamentarians elected

by the voting public have been responsible for the legislation and regulation of broadcasting in the public's interest. Moreover, the governing principle of editorial independence explains why European public broadcasters have been keenly interested in more direct accountability to their audiences, both in their capacity as consumers paying the costs and as citizens casting the votes. But whether broadcasting is public or private, constructing appropriate accountability measures represents a forbidding challenge (the chapter by Jakubowicz has much more).

This desire for more direct accountability is a decisive reason why interactivity also arouses enthusiasm among broadcasters. But thinking about the nature of broadcasting, that also merits critical comment. If broadcasting is seen as a social good, following Scannell (1989 & 1996), then its social and cultural relevance doesn't depend on *immediate* feedback in media-audience interactions. Feedback comes in various ways and over extended periods, but in this perspective it's most relevant to highlight how people use the social good in interaction with each other, and actually in their participation in society and culture most generally. Much of the interactivity offered by new media instead focuses on direct media-user relationships that neglect those *broader* social and cultural dynamics.

Finally, one could also wonder why the cultural studies approach frequently appears to be so worried about the unidirectionality of broadcasting? As reception studies (cf. Lindlof, 1988; Morley, 1992; Ang, 1996) effectively demonstrate, reception is a creative process wherein receivers use content to negotiate their own meanings, regardless of the unidirectional flow of messages in any medium.

Broadcasting in social application

The foregoing has hinted at ingredients that must frame any consideration of the social application of broadcasting. Here we return to a point earlier set aside. Of course there are different ways to handle the management of processes and practices necessary to exploit any resource. Although the resource is natural, deciding between alternatives depends on normative judgement. Judgements are made in light of values, often in contradiction and constantly evolving.

Consider the North Sea and the oil that lies beneath it to illustrate. Is the sea of greater value than the oil? What are the standards for judging comparative worth? What is the value of the oil if it can't be extracted? Are all things natural inherently of greatest worth or all things industrial inherently threatening? Can the oil be exploited without damaging the ocean and, if so, at a profit? Is the environment more secure if extraction were managed by a public institution or a private corporation? Should something be a business simply because it can be economically profitable? Are there non-com-

merce values that ought to be compelled via regulation? Is competition always, only beneficial and regulation always, only detrimental?

In our example, the focus is on who should be allowed to exploit a resource, for what purposes, to whose benefit, and at what cost? In recent years, neo-liberal ideas have become extremely influential in normative discourse and judgements about how best to do most society functions (see the chapter by Sampson & Lugo for more discussion). It seems to us that the 'neo' in this formulation is about capturing the Center via co-optation. Ideals historically associated with Liberal ideology now animate party platforms on the Left, as evident for example in the so-called 'Third Way and New Labour,' while in America the Bush administration (Right) trumpets 'Compassionate Conservatism.'

The success of neo-liberal ideology is by now so great that in official policy discourse one rarely hears much in rebuttal about the glorified virtues of 'competition, deregulation, and market forces' as remedial for nearly every problem. The idea seems to be that if something can be privatized it ought to be, and that every public institution should be organized and operated on the same principles as 'any normal' (i.e., commercial) company. For example, according to EU policy discourse, public service broadcasting must now be legitimated as an 'exception' or even an 'exemption' to *normal* practice. Private ownership of the public interest is already well down the road towards being naturalized.

But the fundamental questions have not been explicitly addressed: who should be allowed to exploit the electromagnetic spectrum resource, for what purposes and at what cost? Is this resource still held to be a public property? Since there isn't enough spectrum space for everyone to own a radio or television channel in every locality, what ought to be obligatory for any person or organization licensed for the privilege? Isn't it fair to call this a privilege since licenses convey comparative advantages to those having them? Perhaps everyone tuning in or turning on benefits from broadcasting, but is that precisely the same as to say that everyone benefits equally from the exploitation of the resource? What are the boundaries beyond which use should be legally accountable as abuse? Is the best idea only to have competition between channels operated on the basis of one approach, or instead to have that complemented by competition between organizations embracing different approaches (cf. Lowe, 1997)? Since broadcasting can be used in many ways for many reasons, which combinations promise the greatest potential for enhancing any comprehensive quality of life? Such questions are supremely relevant for media policy discussion and deliberation in the "age of access" (Rifkin, 2000).

Historically, media policy has made pointed distinctions between the kinds of obligations and correlated regulations that govern wired versus wireless communication. Telephone operators haven't controlled content while broadcasters have, so the rules have been different. Cable and satellite television companies have been allowed to transmit genre and scenes that were for-

bidden for terrestrial broadcasters because the former were contracted services while the later are free-to-air. In recent years such distinctions are increasingly blurred in media policy, especially evident for example in the U.S. Telecommunications Act of 1996 (for more, see the chapter by Stavitsky & Avery). It's as though the same broad blanket is presumed to cover all under the rubric of something we might call 'telecasting.' Still more recently, there has been discussion about 'auctioning spectrum space.' That formulation explicitly frames the resource as nothing more or less than a commodity per se, the worth of which would be determined exclusively by the highest bidder. It seems only a matter of time before 'the public airwaves' are owned as private property. No hunting or fishing. Do not trespass. Beware of dog.

These notions are legitimated by a presumptive 'thesis of abundance.' The Big Idea hinges on an argument that broadcasting is only one part of a bountiful new media environment. Because there are so many ways to deliver any type of content, the medium in itself is *only* a utility. Expansive consumer choice is loudly heralded and abundance is quite gratifying to contemplate. Although there is truth in that, it neatly but regrettably sidesteps the factual limitations of resource availability as well as the historic recognition that broadcasting is not a private right but a public privilege. Stated bluntly, broadcasting is not telephones, the Internet or a newspaper. It shares some roles in common, and can have similar functions in select areas, but it also has unique attributes.

As a medium, broadcasting facilitates the most rapid, broad and cost-efficient participation in anything unfolding moment by moment. As John Ellis, the British television theorist, concluded in his recent book (2000: 74-75), broadcasting creates a sense of contact with other members of the dispersed audience, a sense that others, anonymous though they may be, are *sharing* the same moment. Broadcast television is present both in the here and now of the individual viewer and of the world that surrounds them.

Broadcasting is also a forum of common ground linking social relations and flattening social hierarchy, as mentioned earlier. It is in fact necessary to many of the practices that by now characterize large-scale democratic systems and discursive process in societies with millions of citizens and increasingly multicultural complexions. There is nothing inherently wrong with harnessing the resource to also support market processes, practices and growth. But acknowledging that doesn't obviate anything in this discussion.

Scannell (1989) has emphasized the role of broadcasting in the constitution of modern democracy as "a shared public life". Broadcasting contributed to new, interactive relationships between public and private life that helped, as he argues, to normalize the former and socialize the latter. In that light, broadcasting can be construed as a right:

In my view equal access for all to a wide and varied range of common informational, entertainment and cultural services, carried on channels that can be received throughout the country, should be thought as an important *citizenship right* in mass democratic societies. It is a crucial means – perhaps the only means at present – whereby common knowledges and pleasures in a shared public life are maintained as social good for the whole population (ibid.; italics by TH & GL).

In light of that, one wonders why or how broadcasting would be less important for the future constitution of democracy? (The chapter by McNair & Hibberd is relevant to this discussion)

Another unique attribute of broadcasting in Scannell's analysis (ibid.) of modern democracy that seems ironic at first blush is the opportunity for participation without involvement (see also McQuail, 1997, who characterizes television as "uninvolving"). Scannell compares live audiences (i.e. on-site participants) of events with television viewers and radio listeners. Whereas a live audience is 'committed' to the event, viewers and listeners can take a non-committal stance. Although viewers and listeners witness the same event, they in fact share it from a critical distance. This notion of 'critical distance', so often celebrated in scholarship, is in fact *institutionalized* in broadcasting via codes like neutrality and balance, and also in essential values like diversity and pluralism.

But Scannell's notion of participation without involvement contrasts rather sharply with one characteristic critique of broadcasting associated with the 'community media' movement beginning in the 1970s, and which continues to be quite important today (see the chapters by Himmelstein & Aslama, and also by Carpentier et al). Throughout the period one thread of relevant discussion seeks to replace institutionalized broadcasting with non-institutionalized narrowcasting to achieve more participatory forms of radio and television. Public broadcasters have been sometimes harshly criticized for being authoritarian and paternalistic (and in Europe also nationalist), while private broadcasters have been castigated for the commercial imperatives that defend barriers against 'non-commercial' involvement.

Ironically, although the various models of citizens' radio and television have remained marginal in practice, characteristic themes keyed to the desirability of narrowcasting have become a norm in today's increasingly deregulated and commercialized media environment. Deregulation discourse about audiences first shifted emphasis from 'mass to segments' and contemporary rhetoric about digitization now takes that a step further in shifting the focus from 'segments to individuals.' This begs the question: what would segmented society and individualized culture need more than shared experiences via channels for interaction to explore their respective but also joint interests? Although some will undoubtedly answer "something other than broadcasting", economies of scale at many levels are clearly involved here (see Turpeinen's chapter).

Europe and America: Comparative cultural contexts

Any discussion about values and judgement inherently signals consideration of complexities inherent in cultural phenomena. As the most complex but fundamental aspect we will treat in brief, we select variables considered most important for the book's contents. With that in mind, we focus on some comparative dynamics in order to highlight the public service approach to broadcasting in view of the book's intended emphasis on new articulations of the remit.

Much of the substance in the various chapters that follow is keyed to American influences, even when an author isn't especially focused on that (2). The United States is the singular Superpower today. The qualities and ingredients entailed in being 'super,' and also whether that inherently means 'superior' as well, are of shared concern. The preponderance of American influence on, in and via modern media is remarkable, and that has detectable heft and hue in many of the contributions (for a global view see the chapter by Raboy; for a view closer to home, see Jackson & Vipond). Although American influence is fortunately benign for the most part, it is important to be clear: the cultural values that ground social theory defining 'the American experiment' are distinctive and often at odds with preferred theory and cherished values grounding life in other places (cf. Kissinger, 2002). That is increasingly understood in comparative assessments of social and cultural dynamics, but worrisomely less so when assessing media policy and economic trends.

The 'Old World' of established heritage and identity is embracing 'a European experiment' that is both alternative to and correlated with its American counterpart (cf. Schlesinger, 1993; Pinder, 1998). As European society grew past its post-War reconstruction trauma, America was a booming business. The long reach and deep pockets of American enterprise, combined with the sincere faith of its citizens in the so-called American Dream, were increasingly influential throughout the period (Hobsbawm, 1995). The Americans enjoyed particular advantages that help account for this.

America didn't have to rebuild a country devastated by war. Although Americans paid a heavy price in loss of life and economic expenditure to win the war, afterwards the US infrastructure was not only still intact – it was factually bigger, stronger and more productive than before (Landes, 1998). America had become a global presence that could start fresh, so to say, by building on something even stronger than before. Of course America invested large sums in helping to rebuild quite a lot elsewhere, but it wasn't simple charity to do so. The United States certainly profited from those investments, as the later decades of the 20th Century amply demonstrate. The Cold War further fueled the rise of American global influence, and ultimately her prestige given the collapse of the Soviet Union (cf. Volkogonov, 1998). There is a lot that is good in all of that, and indeed so much that is infinitely preferable to the likely alternatives had America and her European allies lost either war.

In global affairs, contemporary American influence is ubiquitous and pervasive. The weight she carries in military, industrial and political affairs is frequently overwhelming and always considerable. Less often highlighted but potentially of even greater significance is the increasingly robust 'ideological' influence America enjoys today (cf. Dorfman, 1983; Walker, 2001), if that can be fairly construed as meaning a particular system of thought proscribed by a characteristic construct of normative values. When reviewing founding documents such as the *Declaration of Independence*, the *U.S. Constitution* and the *Bill of Rights*, for example, there is such striking emphasis on the supreme value of the individual and the sanctity of the private sphere. The American social system is partly premised on the idea that government can't be trusted and one really ought to avoid it to the greatest possible extent.

Fundamental American values keenly focus on the primacy of privacy keyed to an ideology of individualism. From its early history as an independent nation, the foundation principles defining social values and ideas about government represent a specifically American view and experience (cf. Hibbert, 1990). That view is certainly reflected in the frequently exuberant and often sacred flavor of self-congratulatory satisfaction attributed to 'the American way.' Both for good and ill, America is a wealthy society because it is devoted to wealth creation. The same system of thought that legitimates America's strengths simultaneously accounts for unenviable weaknesses.

This overview provides a useful framework for understanding that Americans do broadcasting for reasons and in ways that satisfy their underpinning system of beliefs and values that continually cultivate American culture (cf. Barnouw, 1975). Despite recurrent concerns and critiques (McChesney, 1990; McCourt, 1999), there's no denying that broadcasting is good business. The Americans have done the best job of figuring out why and how. American producers have learned how to make shows that people want to watch because if they don't watch, or if not enough of the right kind of people watch, one can't sell enough advertising or sell any of it at a dear enough price. So content doesn't have to be great art or deeply provocative or even especially precise. It must be something to which enough people will watch or listen to comprise a market that advertisers want to 'target.' Don't worry; be happy. It's just TV. It's only radio. And, anyway, how many people actually go to an art gallery every week, or buy and read deeply provocative books, or check one news source against other sources to determine the accuracy of a story?

This is what the fight for a different theory of broadcasting is up against. It's far from certain this is a winnable battle, and that would be a pity because there's little in the American approach today even hinting at a mission. On the contrary, since the early 1980s there has been cumulative deterioration in standards and principles that would highlight any recognition that private privileges obligate social responsibilities. That view is by now quite alternative in the US and far more characteristic at present of the 'hu-

manistic traditions' inscribing European social theories. But the ideological influences discussed earlier highlight why such are evidently under siege in Europe, too. Although the Americans are frequently blamed, in point of fact Americans aren't making laws in Europe. Influencing, yes, but that isn't the same thing, is it?

European governments are making choices between alternative approaches, judging normative matters by varying and often contending points of view, while slowly making progress towards a constitutionally federal Union. Moving that process forward has largely been operationalized via economic trade and commercial relations (Urwin, 1993). That is one bright thread in pan-European treaty obligations beginning with the 1957 Treaty of Rome down to the present day (Burgess, 2000). To paraphrase a familiar quote from an early 20th Century American President, Mr. Calvin Coolidge, "the business of Europe has become business."

Contextual dynamics and the public service remit

In these murky waters of social transformation on so many levels and involving so many actors, it's difficult to swim against such a powerful tide in discussing alternative principles for broadcasting. But such principles are the animate ideals that cultivate an ethic which is known today as 'public service broadcasting'. Although varied because of contextual dependencies, in general that ethic includes the following ideals (c.f. Collins, 1998: 51-74; Tracey, 1998: 18-32):

- Broadcasting is for everyone
- Broadcasting has mandated responsibilities for serving cultural and social minorities, not only markets or majorities, thereby guaranteeing pluralism and diversity
- Broadcasting is one essential tool supporting contemporary democratic practice
- Equal opportunity to know more and understand better is a civic right and social necessity that broadcasting must help facilitate
- Broadcasting is owned by everyone who pays the same tax, the payment of which entitles one to receive the same benefit as any other taxpayer
- Broadcasting must nourish culture because it is a living record and active embodiment of human understanding
- Broadcasting is vital for broad content provision of information, entertainment and education

- Broadcasting is an essential platform for social sharing, nurturing identities and supporting the construction of communities

It's relevant to observe that the motivation and correlated objectives for broadcasting practice have content implications. Commercial media operators are fond of saying they 'give people what they want' instead of presuming they know what people need. More precisely if less laudatory, they offer whatever consumers are willing to purchase and discontinue any offer that doesn't earn profit. And that's fine as far as it goes. The problem is that it doesn't go far enough because broadcasting is about much more than programs.

Although much is made of competition as an inherent commercial good, the biggest profits and highest security are only realized when a business has a monopoly. Although the deregulation mantra always promises greater competition, in application it usually results in fewer competitors (Horowitz, 1989). The historical record is remarkably consistent. Deregulation encourages consolidation and, rather often, eventually results in oligopoly. A handful of giant and increasingly global, multinational corporations eventually control the market, which is certainly happening in media industries (Miller, 2002).

The *mission* for the public service approach to broadcasting is premised on principled understandings that have nothing to do with private ownership and, until recently, also nothing to do with financial gain. The later is changing because policy makers enamoured with neo-liberal ideology often encourage and even require such. Public broadcasting companies are typically underfunded today, and financial problems are further compounded by mandates for new media and other infrastructure development that are costly and uncertain. The earlier example of Finnish DTT illustrates rather too well.

The motivations reflected in the ethic that underpins public service broadcasting – the motivations that frame mission objectives – are therefore increasingly conflicted with other motivations framing operational intentions (cf. Engelman, 1996; the chapter by Holtz-Bacha is also pertinent to this discussion). In this period of hybrids and amalgamation, public institutions are expected to organize and even operate as private companies while private companies are released from social obligations to serve the public interest. Broadcasting is not the only thing at stake here – at stake are the much broader culture values and social theories that define society relations. Even if one isn't especially interested in broadcasting per se, broadcasting is nonetheless extremely relevant as a nexus of broader trends and policy elaboration today.

Re-visionary interpretations of the public enterprise

The essential idea behind Re-visionary Interpretations of the Public Enterprise [RIPE] is a recognition that conceptual justification (i.e. legitimacy) for

public service broadcasting no longer resonates. The mission and mandate for PSB was framed in a social context that no longer exists (c.f. Tracey, 1998). In the period between 1935 and 1965, social relations and society conditions legitimated an approach to broadcasting that remains the only robust alternative to the industrial, commercial model that dominates in North America and is increasingly influential nearly everywhere. The case remains to be made as to whether that alternative can weather the storm of legislative and environmental changes that so fundamentally challenge its historic legitimacy, and also whether the approach can even be launched in countries lacking this electronic media heritage (consider the chapter by Vartanova & Zassoursky). Is our faith in public service broadcasting justified? Is this really *worth* believing in?

Such can only be answered by considering two essential questions that ground the RIPE initiative. What is compellingly different about the public service approach that could convincingly justify its remit today, and if compelling and convincing then what contemporary ingredients could fruitfully reframe its conceptual and operational designs? There is breathing space to make the case after the Amsterdam Protocol (1997) and subsequent, related decisions taken by the European Commission and the Council of Europe. Much of that is variously treated in the chapters that follow. But this breathing space is arguably limited in scope and duration, and the outcome remains uncertain. The authors illustrate complexities that must exercise media scholars and public broadcasters choosing to accept the challenge.

It is crucial to observe, however, that neither community (media scholars or public broadcasters) is likely to achieve any confident resolution in the absence of the other. Both conceptual and institutional issues are at stake. Although theory can (and actually must) divorce the two in the pursuit of intellectual enrichment, in practice it has long been clear that conceptual identity and institutional arrangement are interdependent. Public service broadcasting is a conceptual frame that informs and steers a correlated practice, and simultaneously a practical system of organizational operation with theoretical implications (for analysis and discussion about such interdependencies, see the chapter case offered by Bardoel & Brants).

These communities often diverge in the values and stakes that define their respective involvement. Although both cherish a tradition of autonomy, for academicians such is largely a matter of intellectual independence while for practitioners the issues are more often about editorial independence. Most academicians are able to view the institution from the outside-in while most practitioners must view it from the inside-out. For the former, PSB is mainly a subject for research and discourse to enrich social and media theory, while for the latter it is mainly an object in application that defines one's daily work and professional identity. There are also specialized professional languages involved, so quite often each community finds discourse in the other at least difficult to decipher, if not impenetrable. Moreover, ideal outcomes and operational limitations frequently diverge. While scholars advance proposi-

tions for expanding audience involvement in program making and even organization decision making, for example, practitioners have found this difficult to accommodate in practice, and, even when pursued with patient determination, too often a regrettably unfruitful endeavor.

And yet we dare to trust that the contents of this book will demonstrate that there is much to be learned and accomplished in working collaboratively – and arguably much that can only be achieved by doing so. Despite acknowledged difficulties and occasional frustrations, the RIPE project is a good will effort on the part of both communities to open doors for deliberation in collaboration. There is much to be done and in this project to date we've only taken the first tentative steps. But so far at least, those steps have taken us somewhere worth going – and worth going further. There is at best a shared conviction that the journey matters to a quality of public life interdependent with social processes that continue to respect and also defend values that nourish media pluralism, cultural diversity, political democracy and social tolerance. There are things that matter more than material matters, and material benefits that can only be realized in full when non-material conditions are conducive.

Thus, the RIPE project also represents convergence – but in areas that have little or nothing to do with technology or industrial dynamics. This collaboration is predicated on shared interests in the public quality of the public interest.

Organization of the text

This book is divided into three sections. It begins with the large-scale society and policy framework, moving next to the institutional framework and organizational practices, and concludes with consideration of reception and application. Thus, *Section One* is about society context, policy discourse and governing concepts, considering PSB from the outside-in. *Section Two* is about mission and mandate, adaptation and change, and looking from the inside-out. *Section Three* is about community involvement, new media, application dynamics, and the borders rather than the sides. Each of the three sections begins with the most general chapter first and ends with the chapter we consider most specific.

The authors of the chapters that follow represent the Trans-Atlantic nature of the RIPE initiative. Most contributions are developed from scholarly papers earlier presented in the *RIPE@2002* conference, and then developed more fully and in various directions for the book. Hujanen and Lowe also invited a few contributions from RIPE conference participants that did not initially present papers in order to fill gaps or to enrich relevant areas of importance to the topic and objectives for this book.

Notes

1. The reader can review all of the materials from the RIPE@2002 conference, including the papers, abstracts, participant list and a transcription of the concluding session, at the following web site address for Re-visionary Interpretations of the Public Enterprise: www.yle.fi/keto/ripe
2. The discussion relates to concerns about the Americanization of European broadcasting (c.f. Sepstrup, 1989; Wieten et al., 2000: x-xi, and then especially also Hujanen's contribution to that volume).

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PUBLIC SERVICE CONCEPTS IN CONTEXT
MEDIA POLICY DYNAMICS

Knowledge Society and Public Sphere

Two Concepts for the Remit

Barbara Thomass

While ‘public sphere’ is an old concept incorporated in debate to enhance reflection on the possibilities of European integration, ‘knowledge society’ is a newer concept linked with efforts to describe an important factor shaping contemporary society. The concepts will be used in this contribution to develop the broadcasting remit for the public sector. Public sphere and knowledge society can both be described as empiric facts and as normative concepts. Public sphere addresses the conditions related to communication in society, while knowledge society addresses the conditions suggested for economic growth and prosperity. As normative concepts, both depend on universal participation to achieve described aims as an optimum.

This chapter begins with discussion about these concepts and what they mean for public communication. Treatment then focuses on their consequences for public service broadcasting. The author concludes with an evaluation that investigates the extent to which the conditions of convergence support these possible new demands and challenges for public service broadcasting.

Public Sphere, Knowledge Society and public communication

Public Sphere

Consideration of the public sphere can be viewed as an empirical fact – which will nevertheless be quite difficult to prove – and as a normative ideal. In the later case, two models can be distinguished (Gerhards, 2002). The first is the *liberal-representative* model beginning with John Locke (1695) and usefully elaborated by John Stuart Mill (1861), Joseph Schumpeter (1942), Anthony Downs (1957) and Bruce Ackerman (1989), among others. Ackerman discussed the dimensions of the concept in relation to the work of Jürgen Habermas (1962).

This model posits the following preconditions: It is obligatory for democracy in a political system that decisions which are binding/obliging be bound to interests and processes expressing and forming the will of citizens. This characteristically happens in elections. In order for citizens to decide they must be informed about the competing candidates for power, and also about the actions and law put into practice since the last previous election. Thus, Robert Dahl (1989) suggests the possibility to inform oneself as a criterion of democratic process in terms of "enlightened understanding".

The role of the public sphere in this model is to deliver information, to contribute to the forming of will and to the control of the political elite. The public sphere is therefore the system of observation, showing the competing political elite. For their part, the political elite knows they are being observed and are dependent on positive attitudes among citizens. They will therefore orient their action towards citizen expectations. In this way a certain responsiveness of the elite to citizens is guaranteed via the public sphere. In large societies, the public sphere is largely constructed via media because intimate, immediate contact between citizens and the political elite isn't possible for most.

The second model is *deliberative* and more demanding as far as the role of the public sphere is concerned. In three dimensions one finds strong aspirations for defining the quality of the public sphere (Gerhards, 1997): 1) Who is speaking in the public sphere? 2) What is the nature of communication in the public sphere? 3) What is the character of the results of a debate in the public sphere?

Jürgen Habermas, Joshua Cohen, Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, authors defending the deliberative model, plead the case for a discourse in the public sphere that is in opposition to the power model where only transparency is demanded. Here the implementation of decisions is also included as a question of power. The 'autochthonous' public sphere, that is to say the desirable, features a participatory civil society comprised of groups of citizens, NGO's, etc. The groups are immediately and intimately bound to the interests and experiences of the citizens represented by them (respectively or collectively).

The character of discourse is a central element in the deliberative model. In a valid discourse, statements are premised on arguments and feature a well-conducted exchange of information and reasoning between the acting groups and parties. The participants are orientated to a dialog, i.e. pursuing an orientation to the arguments of the others. Thus, the rationality of debate is a given.

While in the first model the outcome of a debate is simply implemented by the majority, in the deliberative model consensus is crucial. Important notions of the public sphere in the deliberative model are inclusion (or exclusion), transparency and access. Media, as an important constitutive element of the public sphere, must implement these notions into social reality.

Knowledge Society

A second concept with relevance for public communication is the knowledge society. The crucial idea here is that since the turn of the century knowledge has assumed such importance that it is no longer goods and services that are most important for the prosperity of a society. Knowledge is a central productive factor.

Knowledge is the result of scientific research, including social and human sciences. Because the effects of scientific results for politics, economy, society, work and everyday life are comprehensive, knowledge about these processes in any form is important – whether first in intimate circles or then by a broad population. The production, distribution and reproduction of knowledge, the content of information, the media of communication, the reasons for knowledge-demand, and the changes caused by knowledge, are all considered as constitutive characteristics of society. We can call this a Knowledge Society if its structures and processes of material and symbolic reproduction are permeated by knowledge-based operations so that information processing, symbolic analysis and expert systems are prevailing factors in reproduction (Willke, 1997: 13).

The central notion of 'knowledge' should therefore be regarded as something more than simply information – more precisely it is information connected with experiences. Or, as Stehr puts it, knowledge is the capability for social action, the possibility "to set something on foot" (Stehr, 1994: 208). It is decisive to take into consideration that knowledge is no longer produced in special circles or sub-systems of society (e.g., only in universities or even in science more generally) but rather in every part of society. In consequence, knowledge and the access to it are vital for production and shape its very structure.

This is even more important for political and social realities. The answers to such questions as who has knowledge, and who has access to knowledge, is at the foundation of social hierarchies, accounts for social inequality, and effects the manner by which power is performed. At its best, it is a precondition for social cohesion and integration and creates chances for social participation and peaceful negotiation of interests. It thereby serves the progress of 'civilisation.' At its worst, domination of the production and distribution of knowledge only serves the interests of a few and enforces social inequality in a global perspective.

Considering these contingencies characterising a Knowledge Society, one may ask which criteria are essential for the first option to be the reality? These criteria would include access to knowledge, social cohesion, integration/inclusion, social participation and peaceful negotiation of interests. When these criteria cannot be met, the result is domination and constriction of knowledge that can only serve the interests of a few. So the positive possibilities of the Knowledge Society demonstrate agreement with the Habermasian deliberative model of the public sphere; they both posit the same preconditions.

The knowledge society and public sphere concepts are linked in a variety of other aspects (Thomass, 2001), four of which are of particular relevance to this discussion.

Cultural orientations and collective identities, which comprise the 'supra-structure' of a society (Willke, 1997), are formed via the media within the public sphere. Therefore, the public sphere can be regarded as a constitutive element of this supra-structure. The experiences of people in the context of a knowledge society, and the changes thereby induced, are expressed within the public sphere – including feedback to the political system. This can be properly understood as a vitalization of the public sphere.

Second, Willke describes the role of the state within a knowledge society as that of a supervisor that enforces the capacity of a society for self-observation, aiming at new perspectives and opinions while also detecting the 'blind spots' of a society (Willke, 1997). Because the Knowledge Society thus attributes to the state a new supervision function for self-governance, it logically follows that the relationship between the public sphere and the political elite can be designated as the supervision of the supervisor. Thus, in a Knowledge Society the public sphere is mandated with supervision of the state. That, in turn, indicates a change in the quality of the public sphere. Questions of access within the public sphere to knowledge and science enjoy heightened relevance.

Third, in a Knowledge Society forms of political governance must also change. The media are correspondingly affected because public communication is characteristically viewed as a 'collateral good' where politics retain responsibility for maintaining reliable standards, ensuring compatibility with the public interest, and for the creation of the necessary legal frame.

Finally and generally speaking, the public sphere becomes more active and demanding. In short, the more that knowledge becomes central to processes and decisions within politics – and this is what the concept of 'knowledge' implies – the more public participation depends on abilities to access relevant knowledge. Knowledge thus becomes a *precondition* for participation. If we then consider this from the perspective of the performance of the public sphere, we can say that knowledge is a determinant of the *quality* of the public sphere. This is precisely why the crucial social question for a Knowledge Society is about how far the potential of values, information and ideas within a society are accessible for a broad majority (Hoffman-Riem, 2000: 9).

Public Sphere, Knowledge Society and public service broadcasting

Before we discuss the extent to which these concepts affect PSB, we must take a closer look at the role of media in the knowledge society. Media are

an integral aspect because they perform a decisive role in the distribution and circulation of knowledge – including popular knowledge of everyday life. The latter is particularly important because non-fictional as well as fictional content form ideas and images of the world and of society. Patterns of values and orientations are shaped via the production and distribution of media content. Selection is therefore vital: Which portions of overall knowledge are made available to become popular knowledge? Those who dominate the media control access to many kinds of knowledge. The quality of knowledge presented in and by the media is therefore one of the shaping elements of the public sphere when one acknowledges that media are a constitutive part of the public sphere.

In communication science, the public sphere was traditionally connected to the media in the sense that media comprise one important field for public discourse and debate about public issues by which the forming of public opinion takes shape (Hickethier, 2000: 4). It is mainly the press and broadcasting that perform these tasks. With the emergence and development of new media, it should be clear that their constitutive role for and in the public sphere must grow.

In consideration of our definition of knowledge as the connection of information and experiences, we can conclude that the supply of popular and popularised knowledge via media is also a constituting element of the public sphere. And if we further consider culture and entertainment in the media, where value patterns, social orientations, general ideas and images are conveyed, we can then underline the proposition that the quality of knowledge presented in the media is one formative element of the public sphere. Even the role of traditional media changes in a Knowledge Society because they are even more vital with regard to their various tasks: To mediate, to provide orientation, to structure, and to show the contexts of information, whether it be in application, action, experience, decisions or expectations.

The abundance of media information demands that media offer answers to questions that would include: "What does this information mean to me? Which sources are the most reliable? What does this information have to do with my specific view on the world?" (Johnson, 1999: 44). Here the primary consideration is not simply that media (with their flood of information) have created the need for such accompanying meta-information (Bleicher, 2001: 212). That is important, of course. But the question also arises as to which media are most appropriate to address such meta-information needs?

In the Knowledge Society, some of the functions of traditional media move to the Internet. These would include providing for education, being a source of information, interpersonal exchange and personal experiences, games, etc. Bleicher observes that television, as well as other traditional media, reacts to the advancing position of the Internet with a reactivation in providing experiences and events: "The growing of knowledge is coming along with a growing supply of entertainment. Knowledge society and nonsense cul-

ture in the media are also in the future strongly interconnected” (Bleicher, 2001: 218). And here is where the question fully arises: What are the consequences for public service broadcasters?

Knowledge society and public sphere are normative concepts (not forgetting they can also be observed empirically). This normativity links with the concept of Public Service Broadcasting because central concerns within the tradition are related to questions of citizenship and consumerism. So at the European level the tradition does represent a normative ideology of media in the service of democracy, and also for the purpose of sustaining the development of national culture and citizenship – i.e. pluralism and diversity.

Public service media are financed to a large extent by license fees and by restricted commercial income, with autonomy from direct political influence, and with broad cultural and social obligations in opposition to the rationale of programming primarily based on commercial profit and audience maximisation. And yet is also clear that public service culture is now approaching a new era where the former appeal to a broad national audience is breaking down. Specialisation and new distribution technologies will change the role and form of public service in the future. One finds that public sector broadcasters, both in radio and TV, have developed new types of programming but have also, in a number of countries, lost a significant share of their former audiences to other channels.

To reiterate, then, defining notions of the public sphere in the sense of a deliberative model emphasise inclusion, transparency, and access. Media are an important constitutive element of the public sphere because they must implement these notions into social reality. But they can fail in this mission when they must also follow competing aims, especially economic ones. Public service media must meet these requirements as valid obligations founded in legal provisions. But the remit of PSB is changing in the conditions of the emerging Knowledge Society.

- The aim of integration can no longer be supported only by the means of television (and radio) but also must include all the new possibilities of online transmission. As the integrational function of PSB cannot be limited to the technical device of television, PSB has to follow its audiences wherever they tend to look for content. The Internet, digital distribution, interactive services and wireless services – all of these are means wherein a public service orientated content must be available for users.
- The old triad of information, education and entertainment will have to be modified and enlarged. Particularly the notion of education will have to be reconceived as knowledge. Education as a main task of PSB stems from the old Reithian era of public broadcasting in the UK, where the BBC from the beginning took over a rather patriarchal role towards its audiences and wanted to “educate” them. The principle behind this education, i.e. enabling audiences to take part in the intellectual rich-

ness of a country, could be well transferred to the notion of knowledge as participation. The capability to use information for social action and activities in the economic, as in the political sphere, is of central importance for the Knowledge Society.

- If the all-encompassing notion of education is altered to the need for a flexible concept of knowledge, this means that individualised forms of supplies must be possible. As digitisation of distribution tends to dissolve the strict border between mass communication and individual communication, it no longer makes sense to reduce broadcasting to mass communication. Video on demand, enhanced programming services, individualised news bulletins, etc. are forms of content delivery which should be involved in the knowledge communication strategy of PSB.
- Universal service (and a basic comprehensive supply, as it is stated in German broadcasting laws with the notion of *Grundversorgung*) has to be reinterpreted as access to any possible transmission of knowledge, and to free individualised services. As platforms of distribution become multiple, questions of access are becoming more and more important. Control over these platforms is no longer with the public broadcasters, but rather with commercial operators. They tend to grant access according to their income interests. This may create problems of access for the public broadcasters and for the audience as well.

The consequences of this are varied and crucial, as Table 1 illustrates:

Table 1. Reinterpretation Consequences

- ✓ PSB must be available on all technical platforms of distribution.
- ✓ Platforms and Electronic Programme Guides (EPG's) must give priority to PSB.
- ✓ It is necessary to develop corporate branding so that (PSB) content is easily recognised in the abundance of media contents and services.
- ✓ Integration is realised no longer via the appeal to the largest possible audience for one programme, but rather of one branded 'type' of contents and services.
- ✓ Integration also means leading those who are not integrated in the knowledge society to the new structures offering knowledge.
- ✓ PSB must provide help for orientation within the market of content and services.
- ✓ PSB must popularise the stocks of knowledge in society.
- ✓ The service of PSB for the public sphere has to change.

The concept of the public sphere also has consequences for PSB, although changes here are not as severe as those correlated with the knowledge society notion. We earlier observed that the public sphere is a space of public communication within democracy that links public opinion and political

action. The public sphere is therefore understood as a space where citizens speak out and express their interests towards the political system, and thereby try to influence and control it. Media are thus a constitutive part of public sphere where they serve as informant, controller and also as a platform for participation and debate – as well as an actor.

Having discussed two different models of the public sphere, criteria for an ideal public sphere were elaborated. These include a broad participation of civil society, rationality and a discourse that results in an approximation or a consensus of those involved (at its best). We also noted changes within the public sphere in conjunction with knowledge society. These were:

- A vitalisation of the public sphere
- A growing demand for the quality of public sphere
- Questions of access to knowledge and science have an increased signification
- The public sphere is attributed the task of supervision of the state. The maintenance of reliable standards of public communication is inalienable
- A more active and demanding public sphere would emerge

Thus, operating logics are designated that are only compatible with the contextual operating logic of the media market under specific conditions. It is far more probable that those media able to perform according to these necessities are those considered most accountable to the public sphere, and with the appropriate structures and content already in place. In short, this means public service broadcasting.

This clearly implies that PSB must meet certain and particular challenges:

Table 2. Public Sphere Challenges for PSB

- ✓ Ensure participation of all parts of the public sphere, of all groups of civil society, in the public discourse
- ✓ Select issues that are relevant to the public interest
- ✓ Offer programmes, genres and formats that permit *and promote* rationality and discourse
- ✓ Ensure access to knowledge and science
- ✓ Facilitate supervision of the state
- ✓ Maintain quality standards

All of this strongly confirms the traditional guiding principles of public service broadcasting. With that in mind, we then must ask about the extent to which they are either threatened or promoted in the conditions of digitisation and media convergence? That question, in turn, is relevant to the consequences for the public sphere when linked with consideration of the knowledge society concept.

Conditions of convergence and new challenges for public service broadcasting

Digitisation and convergence change the mediascape. For some scholars, the changes are thought to endanger the future existence of PSB. Thus, we should investigate the relations between the challenges and demands discussed to this point in light of the conditions of convergence. Do the conditions support or hinder the development of PSB? What does convergence mean for satisfying the demands?

The notion of convergence has undergone several permutations in meaning. Although digital TV and online services develop parallel convergence, this is not actually a 'melting' but rather "...new combinations of different platforms for distribution and access, terminals, services and content" (Kubiczek et.al., 1998: 142). Computers and television sets will continue, and for a given time digital TV and new online services will exist side by side. But via convergence, a new environment is emerging in which the broadcasting system becomes part of a diversified communication and information system offering services with overlapping sectors. "The state of development of this communication system has its repercussion to the possibilities of development of the broadcasting system" (Hoffmann-Riem, 2000: 8), and therefore on PSB as well. It is crucial to observe that this convergence is creating the technical potential necessary to bring about the change from a post-industrial society to the Knowledge Society.

New platforms of distribution and access allow new forms of products and marketing. Packing programmes as bundles (or 'bouquets') is one example, and actually dominant since the launch of digital television. This has created, in the eyes of the audience, a perception that digital TV is the same as Pay-TV. This perceived image is obviously a problem for Public Service Broadcasting because knowledge about their free-to-air services is undermined and possibly even underdeveloped.

Meanwhile, the bundling of programmes as packages that have to be subscribed as a whole means, for traditional mixed and also specialised channels, an erosion of market share. Digitisation of distributing techniques enables strategies of differentiation as an increasingly typical practice – obviously the case, for example, with the new 'targeted programme bouquets.' So the number of the channels is growing rapidly, but doing so under conditions indicating a limited increase of content. It is nonetheless attractive financially because the reduction of costs to be realised in the digitised relationship is on the order of 1:6 compared with terrestrial analogue distribution (Hadas-Lebel, 2000: 50). This suggests enormous incentive for PSB broadcasters struggling and suffering with escalation in content and copyright costs.

Digitisation also makes it possible to introduce new forms of interactivity. Although such possibilities were first greeted with enthusiasm, recently a gloomier sense of reality has emerged due to the slow pace in developing

the technical means for interactive features. But crucial questions are nonetheless valid for future PSB strategies: What degree of interactivity might or will be technically possible, which options are economically reasonable, which alternatives are desirable, and what will the user of potential interactive services actually be interested in? These are open questions where PSB will and can give different answers than commercial broadcasters.

Concerning the user, traditional television has inculcated a specific practical value via its programming, its way of structuring time and in serial supplies. It promises participation in a common cultural practice. It features a stable media disposition, reflecting traditional patterns of working and leisure time. We can suppose there is need for structure as an anthropological constant. Trends in greater flexibility in working time would likely change patterns of reception and preferences in the use of media. This would further imply that traditional programming would not be accepted in the same way.

Given the abundance of channels, one should also expect that electronic programme guides and navigation systems will be increasingly important for users, and also as instruments for marketing. There is a possibility that the characteristic identity of a traditional programme provider could collapse. This would have dire consequences for public service broadcasters because they are already living on a strong image and identity as a programme producer and provider.

All of these noted changes equated with convergence must be added to those that have already been broadly described under the rubric of 'liberalisation and commercialisation' of the public sector, combined with deregulation and 'globalisation.' Although convergence is changing the shape and contours of the mediascape, pluralism, diversity, freedom of information, access and availability of specific content and quality have to be secured as target objectives for the concept of the public sphere to persist. This is keenly relevant for any with a legitimate interest in developing the public sphere in a manner that subscribes to the deliberative model, and also in order to achieve the most promising options for a contemporary Knowledge Society.

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Rethinking Broadcasting Policy in a Global Media Environment

Marc Raboy

Once upon a time, states and governments representing the public interest could – if they wished – exercise a certain constraining influence on the appetite of commercial media. Conventional wisdom has it that era is past, although a healthy synergy still exists in many parts of the world between public policy instruments and objectives in the cultural sphere. Nonetheless, in the year 2002, it is useful – indeed imperative – to situate the future of the very idea of public service media in a global context.

Great national institutions in the heartland of public service broadcasting – western Europe, Canada, Japan, Australia – continue to occupy significant space in the media landscape. In the new democracies of Africa, Asia and central and eastern Europe, the public broadcasting model is seriously examined as an alternative to its strictly commercial counterpart. Public broadcasting no longer enjoys monopoly status, is no longer clearly distinguishable from the rest, but it remains an important reminder of the social and cultural possibilities of the media, in an age when the dominant thrust is overwhelmingly oriented towards consumerism (cf. Raboy 1996).

In this new, increasingly seamless global communication environment, public broadcasting is more than an outmoded utopian dream: It can be seen as a model for public policy development with respect to media in the context of globalization, new technologies and shifting terrains of audience demographics, loyalties and behavior patterns.

This chapter explores this issue, looking at some of its theoretical foundations as well as how it is playing out in actual policy sites. My goal is to validate the idea that it is time to start thinking about transnational and global approaches to public media. I shall begin by recalling some aspects of the concept of public broadcasting.

The Idea of the Public

In a remarkable article published in the only issue of a short-lived Canadian journal in 1960, an adult education activist named Alan Thomas explored the distinctions between three notions of the same thing: the audience, the market, and the public (Thomas, 1960). Thomas reflected that the evolution of Canadian broadcasting had been dominated by the interaction between these different ways of describing the receiving end of broadcasting.

The market, Thomas noted, is characterized by attention to things rather than people; in the name of freedom of enterprise, it is attentive to the interests of “private” operators; in Canada, the market by nature tended to be continental rather than national, “and its uncontrolled operations have been seen as hostile to the existence of Canada as a national entity” (p. 22).

The public, on the other hand, is identified with the state and the community; Canada’s problem was how to create a genuine public out of separate geographic (as well as linguistic and cultural) communities: “The whole history of Canada has been a conflict between the public which is Canadian and the market which has been predominantly American” (p. 24). There was a conflict here between the classical Athenian notion of the public and the public that had developed with the age of broadcasting.

The audience is something else again, Thomas wrote. Considered passive, the audience is made up of members of a public, as well as a potential market, when they are tuned in. Unlike the public or the market, the audience is wholly a creation of broadcasting – it does not exist without it.

The crux of Thomas’ argument was that media tend to address people as members of an audience, not a public; media *policy*, however, attempts to restore the balance in broadcasting where market considerations have outstripped public ones in their relations with the audience. Audience and market tend to create a state of equilibrium. Restoring the role of the public requires some kind of intervention to counteract that.

Around the same time, in the U.S., the critical sociologist C. Wright Mills was tying the classical notion of the public to the critique of mass society, and saw a pivotal role being played by changing forms of communication. In 1956, analyzing the rise of the American ‘power elite’, Mills wrote that it “rests upon, and in some ways is part of, the transformation of the publics of America into a mass society” (Mills 1956 [1959]: 297).

The idea of the public in a context of globalization can be viewed through a similar lens. In *The Power Elite*, Mills recalled that the most important feature of “the public of opinion” that had arisen with the democratic middle class, was “the free ebb and flow of discussion” and the possibility of ‘answering back’ through autonomous organs of public opinion, actively realized within the established democratic institutions of power. (Thomas had written that one way of enhancing the role of the public was to create stronger two-way channels between producer and audience). The image of this clas-

sical democratic public was already something of an illusion in the 1950s America of which Mills wrote.

Mills reviewed the political process through which this had come about: the arrival of mass democracy upset the democratic society of publics, by placing the sovereignty of 'the people' over that of the individual. The harmony of interests assumed by the democratic society of publics had given way to the doctrine of class struggle. The idea of rational decisions based on public discussion was bypassed by the insistence on a need for experts, and by the notion of irrational man.

Mills then made a clear distinction between the public and the mass, a distinction he tied explicitly to the role of media. Nearly fifty years later, one can read in this work an opposition of the realities of conventional mass media and the promise or potential of the best offered by the so-called 'new media'. Or, one can read it as an opposition between the ideal and the reality of conventional nationally-based public service broadcasting, as Thomas might have. Mills was not talking about public broadcasting, and we have no evidence that he was even particularly aware of it. But his text, read alongside that of his contemporary, Thomas, allows us to think about the democratic possibilities of a new public service media model, grounded in the technological and geopolitical context of the 2000s.

The idea of public broadcasting

Today's notion of the public collides and overlaps with other contested, still useful, notions that need to be re-problematized: notions such as community, nation, citizen, and consumer (cf. Yudice 1995). These concepts are tied together insofar as they are all possible discourses of legitimation for public policy intervention in various spheres of human activity, particularly for national states (cf. Garnham 2000).

The idea of the public, however, is a particularly useful construct when it comes to legitimating policy intervention with respect to media and communication (cf. Syvertsen 1999). What are the new discourses on public media in an age of global politics and instantaneous communication (cf. Graham and Davies 1997)? Can we speak of promoting and protecting normative values with respect to new media such as the Internet (cf. Grainger 1999)? Can we translate pre-globalization notions of the public, confined within the borders of national states, to anything approaching a transnational or global public sphere (cf. Sparks 1998; also Venturelli 1993)? Can there be such a thing as cultural rights and entitlements beyond the framework of the national welfare state (cf. Calabrese and Burgelman 1998)?

National peculiarities aside, questions concerning media structures are increasingly global ones. In the new broadcasting environment, the issue of public service broadcasting can be reduced to this: What social and cultural

goals attributed to broadcasting require a specially mandated, non-commercially driven organization, publicly owned, publicly funded to the extent necessary, and publicly accountable (cf. World Radio and Television Council 2000; Tongue 1996; Atkinson 1997)?

Broadcasters, politicians, media professionals and creative people, community activists, and scholars worldwide were wrestling with this question in the early 2000s. While the diagnosis is global, the prescriptions are necessarily context-specific. When we put them together, however, we find the basis for a global portrait and a sketch of a solution in the range of models, examples and ways of framing the issues.

The context of technological convergence and the accompanying policy debates can help to further clarify the concept of public service with respect to media generally and, hence, to develop a more appropriate conception of public service broadcasting. In telecommunication, for example, the concept of universal public service has been much more clear and straightforward than in broadcasting. The principle of universality has been tied to the operational provision of affordable access (not an issue in broadcasting as long as the main means of transmission was over-the-air, but increasingly so with the addition of various tiers of chargeable services).

The displacement of universal service by subscriber-based and pay-per-view services is the strongest factor favoring a shift towards the consumer model in broadcasting and proponents of public broadcasting feel that this needs to be countered by policy measures and institutional mechanisms to promote the democratic function of broadcasting. This can only come about through a rethinking of what we mean by public service broadcasting.

For example, traditionally, public service broadcasting has been expected to represent the national as opposed to the foreign. It may be time to refocus these conceptual categories in terms of the local and the global. Global cultural industries recognize this by developing products targeted to 'niche markets'. Public broadcasting has a different role, which it seeks to fulfil principally by conceiving of its audience as a public rather than a market. Some programs may speak to a particular national public, but on any given national territory there will be less-than-national broadcasting needs to be fulfilled. National networks can no longer be expected to be forces of cohesion; they can, however, be highly effective distribution systems for programs of importance to the communities they serve. For this to occur, public service broadcasting needs to be redefined in terms suitable to a new public culture, global in scope and experienced locally.

Nothing in the idea of public service broadcasting ties it intrinsically to that of nationhood. It is, however, necessarily linked to notions of community. In order to flourish in the future, public service broadcasting will need to be reconceptualized in the context of a changing role for the still-present, still formidable nation state. As the alternative to the state becomes the market, the alternative to national public service broadcasting has been constructed as private sector broadcasting; but this parallel is logically flawed as well as

politically shortsighted. The globalization of markets is both global and local, in that global products are usually produced according to a common standard, distributed worldwide and consumed locally, everywhere. As the nation state struggles to find its way in this new environment, so does public service broadcasting. It is false to assume, however, that there is no longer a need for public service broadcasting, for this is at present the only established medium that can still be said to place social and cultural concerns before the imperatives of the marketplace.

Today, despite the rapid move towards globalization, broadcasting is still legally constituted within the confines of national borders. Every national government is at some point faced with making basic decisions about broadcasting, if only to consider the allocation of frequencies to which it is entitled by international agreements. The immediate result of these decisions is a *national broadcasting system* in every country, made up of one or more component parts.

One encounters a variety of existing broadcasting institutions in this global environment. Despite a great variation from one country to the next, however, there are only three basic types of national system. Each one, while possibly encompassing different institutions, is built around a 'core' in which a particular institutional form is dominant. I call these three main types 'public service core systems', 'private enterprise core systems', and 'state core systems' (Raboy 1997).

Most of the countries we think about when we talk about public broadcasting in the conventional sense have established public service core systems. These are the systems in which companies like the BBC (UK), CBC (Canada), ABC (Australia) and so forth have flourished over the years. These are also the countries in which the question of financing has been most difficult recently. For obvious reasons, we have all been anxiously watching the evolution of these broadcasters and their efforts to adapt to the challenges of the new environment.

Public broadcasting has been relatively underdeveloped in those countries with private enterprise core systems, such as the USA, where public broadcasting was never intended to be the central component of the system. In private enterprise core systems, public broadcasting has been positioned as a marginal 'alternative' to commercial broadcasting.

The state core systems include the 'residual' systems of countries which have not yet broken with the tradition of a single, monolithic national broadcaster, as well as 'emergent' systems which, although built around a state-owned and controlled broadcaster, are opening up to alternative commercial and community voices, such as one finds in parts of Asia and Africa where democratization is on the agenda. They also include most of the former Soviet-bloc countries, which can be described as 'transitional', insofar as they seem to be inclined towards the existing dominant models.

This said, I think the most important thing to recognize now is that, in the context of globalization, *all of these hitherto national systems are merging*

into a single global system made up of a mix of public, private and other types of broadcasters. As an increasingly transnational political system emerges, new cross-border public service media are beginning to emerge, buttressed by the existing national frameworks. Television services such as TV5 and ARTE are examples of this. Associations of community radio broadcasters, video makers, and progressive Internauts abound at other points of the spectrum. The point is this: In a system that is predominantly influenced by market forces, an important place should be reserved for institutions that promote the cultural development on which the quality of democratic public life depends. This is a political project that can be approached from a perspective of media policy. In the very near future we need to begin paying a lot more attention to the *global ecology of broadcasting* as a public service environment.

Transcending the national

In light of the growing commercialization of all media, public broadcasting continues to designate a strong value of social worth, the 'last best hope' for socially purposeful media acting in the public interest. But traditional public service broadcasters are all facing pressure to diversify funding sources and increase mass-market programming at the very time that all broadcasters' market shares are inevitably in decline (due to the sheer multiplicity of channels). Competition for revenues, meanwhile, both public and commercial, is more intense than ever (cf. McKinsey & Company 1999; Graham et al 1999).

It is now apparent that, in order to survive, every broadcaster needs to find a place for itself within an overall broadcasting system that is simultaneously both local and global. There is still no substitute for independent, publicly-funded public service broadcasting organizations, as the Council of Europe acknowledged in 1994 when it identified public broadcasting as essential to the healthy functioning of the media in a democratic society (Council of Europe 1994)¹. But at the systemic level there is an important shift underway: increasingly, public authorities are looking towards the capacity of national broadcasting systems *as a whole* to meet public interest goals and objectives.

The inclusion of a European Protocol in favor of public service broadcasting in the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty was an important step in this direction (Council of the European Union 1997). This was one of the first concrete transnational agreements to support non-commercial practices in the sphere of culture. It made the point that despite the emphasis on markets and trade in international agreements, national governments could still legitimately make policies and promote cultural institutions that would foster values and objectives outside the sphere of commerce. Not only did this declaration demonstrate the power of politicians to resist commercial pressures, it was the first and to this date most substantial example of a cultural

exception to the new rules of deregulation that are being negotiated and applied by transnational authorities. It is no coincidence that this occurred in the area of public broadcasting. It is both an interesting policy model and a harbinger of the possible usefulness of the public broadcasting model in developing new public media forms in the transnational, convergence-driven media environment.

The EU protocol considers “that the system of public broadcasting in the Member States (of the European Union) is directly related to the democratic, social and cultural needs of each society and to the need to preserve media pluralism”. This in itself is important in terms of legitimation of public service broadcasting at a time when its basis is under attack on both ideological and economic grounds. It links public broadcasting to the question of democracy, emphasizes its sociocultural nature as a public service, and underscores the distinctive role of public broadcasting in an otherwise uniformly commercial system.

The European Broadcasting Union remarked that this was “the first time that the role and specific nature of public service broadcasting have been explicitly recognized within the legal framework of the European Union” (European Broadcasting Union 1997: 1). The Protocol represented a political consensus and sent an important signal, according to the EBU, but “the effectiveness of this guarantee will probably depend on a clear, sufficiently broad definition being set out by each Member State of the public service remit conferred upon the public service broadcasting organizations” (p. 1).

Multilateralism

The question of public media has also figured prominently in recent debates at the multilateral level. The World Commission on Culture and Development, created in 1991 by the United Nations and UNESCO, reported to the UNESCO General Assembly in November 1995 (UN/UNESCO, 1995). In a broad review of cultural issues ranging from ethics to the environment, the WCCD proposed an international agenda for developing global policy with respect to cultural development. Several chapters and proposals relating to mass media and new global issues in mass communication were framed by the following question: *“How can the world’s growing media capacities be channelled so as to support cultural diversity and democratic discourse?”* (p. 123-7)

The WCCD recognized that while many countries were dealing individually with various important aspects of this question, the time had come for a transfer of emphasis from the national to the international level. While many countries still needed to be incited to put in place or modernize existing national frameworks, a transfer of attention was now justified.

Can we envisage a world public sphere in which there is room for alternative voices? Can the media professionals sit down together with policy-makers and consumers to work out mechanisms that promote access and a diversity of expression despite the acutely competitive environment that drives the media moguls apart? (p. 117)

The WCCD admitted that it did not have ready answers to these questions, but that answers had to be sought through international dialogue. It envisioned “a common ground of public interest on a transnational scale...that different national approaches can be aligned, that broadly acceptable guidelines could be elaborated... that new international rules are not a pipe-dream but could emerge through the forging of transnational alliances across the public and private media space” (p. 117).

In short, “There is room for an international framework that complements national regulatory frameworks” (p. 117).

The WCCD’s international agenda contained a series of specific proposals aimed at “enhancing access, diversity and competition of the international media system”, based on the assertion that the airwaves and space are “part of the global commons, a collective asset that belongs to all humankind” (p. 278). It suggested that the time may have come for commercial media interests that now use the global commons free of charge to contribute to the financing of a more plural media system, where “new revenue could be invested in alternative programming for international distribution” (p. 278). Finally, it called for the United Nations system to explore appropriate global mechanisms analogous to national models of public service broadcasting.

One of the most crucial aspects of this question that needs to be addressed is how to avoid such a discussion becoming yet another debate among states, each representing its own national interest and those of its partners in the private sector, rather than among a global public dealing with global issues, across national borders and in quest of a global public interest.

The “Action Plan for Cultural Policies for Development”, adopted at the 1998 UNESCO-sponsored Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development in Stockholm, provided some important examples that can serve as a starting point for discussion on such matters (UNESCO 1998). The conference endorsed a dozen principles including the fundamental right of access to and participation in cultural life, and the cultural policy objective of establishing structures and securing adequate resources necessary to create an environment conducive to human fulfillment. Among the relevant policy recommendations, the conference asked UNESCO member states to:

- Promote communication networks that serve the cultural and educational needs of the public;
- Consider providing public radio and television;
- Promote space for community, linguistic and minority services;

- Adopt or reinforce national efforts that foster media pluralism and freedom of expression;
- Promote the development and use of new technologies and new communication and information services at affordable prices.

The appearance of such an action plan endorsed by 140 governments under the sponsorship of a world intergovernmental organization was certainly uplifting, but the subtext and context surrounding its adoption also pointed to the difficulties that lay ahead. It took two-and-a-half years to organize the Stockholm Conference, following the tabling of the WCCD Report on which the working documents presented in Stockholm were based. The proactive thrust of that report, based on the use of existing policy mechanisms and the extension of the national policy logic to the global level, did not survive the diplomatic horse-trading that culminated in the Action Plan adopted in Stockholm.

Furthermore, the draft version of the action plan presented at the outset of the conference was far more affirmative in encouraging member states to provide public radio and television (rather than merely “consider” their provision), and in calling for international as well as national legislation to promote media pluralism. Significantly, a proposal that such legislation foster “competition and prevent excessive concentration of media ownership” was changed to refer instead to “freedom of expression”. A proposal to “promote the Internet as a universal public service by fostering connectivity and not-for-profit user consortia and by adopting reasonable pricing policies” disappeared from the final text.²

Globalization

As we have seen, the limits and possibilities of policymaking are cast into sharp relief by the various aspects of what has come to be known as globalization – a situation that I would define as being characterized by the following six broad characteristics: the diminishing sovereignty of national states; the increasing integration of the world economy; the technologically-based shrinking of time and space; the passing of received ideas about identity; the emergence of new geographically dispersed yet locally-based global networks; and the establishment of a new framework for global governance.

In the sphere of media and communication, public policy has historically sought to overcome the constraints of scarce resources – as in the case of radio, (and later) television air waves, for example. In today’s information environment, scarcity is no longer the problem, the problem is access. Today’s policy issues must address the problems raised by information abundance and the need to be sure that this cornucopia of information is mean-

ingfully accessible to citizens and not only packaged as marketable commodities or targeted to elites.

Access to the means of communication can be defined from the point of view of the receiver or from that of the producer, as the capacity to receive everything that is available or as the possibility to bring one's messages to the audience. To the extent that market forces alone can never guarantee access, in either of these terms, governments, regulatory authorities and media institutions must develop and implement policies designed to maximize access. The need to ensure access thus remains an important justification of the need for public policy in the sphere of communication.

Regulation, too, still has a role to play in ensuring equitable access to distribution markets for producers and consumers, and in ensuring that the means of communication can be channeled towards social and cultural objectives. Regulatory frameworks may vary considerably from one context to another, but they are always, necessarily in democratic societies, part of a public policy process (Bollinger 1990). Opening up the process of policymaking, policy evaluation and regulation to broader public participation is therefore an important aspect of access to communication (cf. Raboy 1995).

Access is also one of the key operative concepts of models that see communication technologies as instruments of social and cultural development. In general, this requires mechanisms to ensure accessibility to channels of production and distribution for all those capable of rallying a minimal public, increasing interactivity in the relations between creators and their publics, and providing for feedback which can ultimately result in corrective measures.

According to classical liberal press theory, unconstrained access to the marketplace is considered to be the best guarantee for the free expression of ideas. The limitations of the market mechanism in providing freedom of information eventually generated its own critique, in light of which the idea that access to the means of communication needed legal and even constitutional assurances rapidly gained currency in the 20th century (Barron 1967).

In countries such as Canada, Australia, Japan and most of western Europe, access to *reception* was guaranteed in the charters of public broadcasting organizations, whose mandates obliged them to make their signals available throughout the territories in which they operated. To a greater or lesser degree, many of these organizations were also non-commercial and required to provide a range of diverse opinion in their programming.

With the emergence of an increasingly seamless global communication environment, critics concerned about the socio-cultural role and democratic function of media have had to refocus their attention. The new context of technological 'convergence' between established communication forms demands that we develop a new conception of access.

To illustrate, consider what happens when conventional broadcast media and telecommunication technologies converge. The notion of access has

traditionally meant different things in broadcasting and in telecommunication. In the broadcasting model, emphasis is placed on the receiver, and access refers to the capacity to choose from the entire range of content on offer. In the telecommunication model, emphasis is on the sender, and access refers to the capacity to use the means of communication to get one's messages out. Within these two models, public policy and regulation have been recognized as necessary social measures for guaranteeing access.

In the context of new media, a hybrid conception of access is necessary, and public policy will need to promote a model of communication which combines the social and cultural objectives of established institutional forms – not only broadcasting and telecommunication, but also libraries, the education system, and so on. Critically, realizing the social and cultural potential of new media requires ensuring maximum access for people to the means of communication *both* in their capacity as receivers and consumers of services *and* as producers and senders of messages (see Hanada 1999).

A policy model directed at maximizing the potential of new media should therefore address the following:

- How to ensure access to both available content and the means of communication
- How to balance universal services and costs that can be left to users
- How to guarantee free choice and fair access
- How to distinguish between public communication and private information
- How to promote both cultural and economic development
- How to situate the user as both citizen and consumer
- How to facilitate both public participation in society and quality of life

This is not merely a structural issue. At the same time as we need to develop new mechanisms, the explosion of information and communication technologies requires us to begin thinking differently about *how* and *to what end* public authorities – at whatever level – can and should intervene. In short, we need a *new paradigm* for media policy, appropriate to the geopolitical and technological context in which we are now living.³

This environment is characterized by a number of new developments. The most significant of these is that communication policy is no longer 'made' at any clearly definable location, but across a range of sites⁴. Specific policy issues, such as copyright or rules governing property transactions or Internet regulation, migrate from one level to another and are often the flash point of conflicts between jurisdictions. Global organizations, such as the World Trade Organization, have superseded national bodies as the supreme instance of policy definition. Exclusive multilateral 'clubs', like the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development or the G8, impose their own agenda

on the lesser economies without even being democratically accountable to their own national constituencies. International trade agreements, such as NAFTA, further constrain the capacities of participating states – while, paradoxically, the national state continues to be the main location for communication and cultural policy debate.

This complex and multifaceted general structure makes it extremely difficult to intervene effectively in the new policy environment. Something akin to a global civil society may well be emerging, but for the moment its links to power and influence are tenuous. At this point, the only actor that has been managing to pursue an agenda with anything approaching consistency is the transnational private sector and concrete policy developments at every level are still being driven essentially by economic concerns. These focus today mostly on the new information and communication technologies and particularly on areas of ‘convergence’ between new and established media forms.

New media have opened the possibility for unprecedented freedom of expression and information flow, but if we are not careful, freedom from state control will be replaced by an even more insidious form of corporate control that is now taking place. Unlike state control, corporate control is first of all structural; it is built in to the architecture of information systems, by designs intended to maximize the possibility for efficient and streamlined profit-taking, rather than effective uses (cf. Lessig 1999).

This is fundamentally and ultimately a governance issue. Traditionally, approaches to communication governance have spanned the spectrum from the authoritarian to the libertarian, with a broad middle ground covering such institutions as public service broadcasting, PTTs, and commercial media (cf. Golding 1998). In actual practice, virtually every modern communication system in the world functions within a regime that is circumscribed and characterized by some degree of national regulation.

I would then suggest that *a regulatory model for communication* governance is the appropriate policy choice for promoting a new global approach to public media. This raises the question of legitimacy for intervening at all in a sector that ought, by definition, to be ‘free’. There is not necessarily a contradiction between regulation and the value of freedom: it all depends on what is regulated and how one decides to regulate – as well as on what basis regulation is justified (cf. Hoffmann-Riem 1996; Machet and Robillard 1998).

The main justification for regulating communication is that regulation provides an opportunity for meeting non-market public policy objectives. This is especially important in a context where the meeting of such objectives has to be spread across a range of organizations within the complex world system that we have today.

In general, the role of regulation would be to determine the public interest with respect to media and communication, on an ongoing basis and with regard to specific issues. This is too fine a job to be done by governments in

the course of their general activities. It can not be left to the media organizations themselves, for they have necessarily vested interests. The marketplace is too blunt an instrument. Citizens can individually and through their collective associations articulate their expectations, but they have no power for implementing them. So what is the solution?

A regulatory model appropriate to the new communication environment created by technological convergence must build on the basic 'pre-convergence' forms that it has eclipsed. When these converge, approaches to regulation must converge as well.

To return to my starting point, none of this will soon make any sense unless the policymaking capacity that used to reside in individual national states is translated to the transnational level and made accountable to a global political constituency. This would then make it possible to begin thinking about intervening globally on a range of important issues that could include:

- Regulation of commercial activities in the public interest, to guarantee equitable access and basic services;
- Funding and institutional support for the creation and sustaining of public service and independent not-for-profit media;
- Placing limits on corporate controls resulting from transnational concentration of ownership in new and conventional media and telecommunications;
- Guarantees of access to available media channels on the basis of public interest criteria;
- Development of universal codes and standards for curtailing the spread of abusive contents;
- Facilitating networking capacity through communication technologies of not-for-profit organizations;
- Provision of public communication spaces for conflict resolution and democratic dialogue on global issues.

This may well be a utopian program. But the very possibility of channeling public media for the good of humanity makes it essential to try turning that dream into reality, even if it means pushing the boundaries of imagination in new and audacious directions.

Notes

1. This is in keeping with other work the Council has sponsored in the sphere of cultural policy, most recently with respect to the importance of enhancing public access to the new ICTs as a way of closing the "digital divide". This work is to be distinguished from the pious statements that emanate from time to time from organizations such as the OECD and G8, which essentially seek to stake out a legitimating discursive framework for pushing

forward the agenda of the global corporate sector. Learning to distinguish between these is a highly valuable skill that scholars such as ourselves can bring to the emerging global media policy debates.

2. As this paper was being written, a World Summit on the Information Society had just been convened by the International Telecommunications Union. That event, scheduled for December 2003, will mark another stage in the evolving multilateral policy discussion in media and communication.
3. On the idea of instituting transnational and global mechanisms as an enabling framework for national policies, see Reinicke 1998.
4. For an extended discussion of this point, see Raboy 2002.

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European Regulation of Digital Television

The Opportunity Lost and Found?

Pertti Näränen

This chapter critically analyses failures in European Union media policy within the field of digital television [DTV] standardisation. The case describes a situation in which market optimism combined with inconsistent 'light touch' regulation has over-ridden public interest principles. The lack of coherent European regulation has negatively impacted the emergence of digital television in relation to market prospects, caused difficulties in the strategies and timetables necessary for broadcasters, and increased consumer mistrust.

As a result, European digital television markets are now technologically fragmented and dominated by major satellite broadcasters, whose proprietary decoder standards prevent viewers from accessing a full range of digital services with one set-top box device. This means access problems and unwarranted expenses not only for digital television consumers but also for content producers, especially non-commercial public interest producers of interactive services. Thus, the public service corporations are also in difficulties to find their 'interactive remit' in the DTV platform. The chapter concludes with discussion about lessons to be learned from such failure and the crucial role of proper media regulation in general.

Marketization of the audiovisual policy – the historical background

Contradictions and conflicting goals have characterised European Union audiovisual policy for far too long. Following Richard Collins (1994), it has become common to see these conflicts as an ongoing battle between contrary regulatory approaches: a *deregulatory* vision and a *dirigiste* vision. The first references market liberalisation while the second refers to regulation by directives keyed to cultural policy operations.

As a dichotomy, the sketch is obviously simplistic. In fact, and as Graham Murdock has convincingly argued, deregulation may itself be a misleading

term in the context. Murdock suggests that ‘*marketization*’ is a more appropriate term because there have been several policy shifts involved: privatisation, liberalisation, the reorientation of regulation, corporatisation and commodification (Murdock, 2000: 39-43). Others have emphasised that the move from monopolies to competition in European television markets prompted regulatory reform and re-regulation rather than wholesale deregulation (Venturelli, 2002: 74; Levy, 1999: 22). One can also note that there has been a clear shift from *cultural regulation to competition re-regulation* with a market orientation in which “state aid” to public service broadcasting is tolerated only as an exception to the rules (cf. Harrison and Woods 2001).

The duality of regulation and marketization is apparent in the *Television Without Frontiers Directive* (TVWF 1989/1997), i.e., the cornerstone document of EU television policy. Its main purpose was to actively deregulate by forbidding Member States to prevent reception of a TV-channel licensed elsewhere in the EU. But in the same breath, it reflected ‘dirigism’, if minimally, because advertising time and the placement of ad slots were regulated, there was emphasis on the protection of children and prohibition of racial or religious hatred, and European content quotas were included. Those quotas oblige broadcasters to reserve a majority proportion of their transmission time for programmes of European origin. The effectiveness of this requirement was halted by provisions specifying that the Member States only need apply quotas “where practicable and by appropriate means” (ibid. article 4). As a result, the practice has only had symbolic impact on satellite and cable broadcasters, while national implementation of content quotas has also been quite irregular (Levy, 1999: 41-44 & 161-164).

The official goal of EU audiovisual policy has been to build a single, commercially competitive European audiovisual market. This is considered important to better compete against the American import of programmes. Regrettably, the objective has never been realised in practice. The TVWF directive has instead mostly supported UK-registered but US-controlled channels and facilitated the hands-free circulation of American programs (ibid., 44, 161). While this neo-liberal television policy has been active, the European Union audiovisual trade deficit with the USA has actually grown larger (Tongue, 1999: 106-9; Hancock, 1998: 137-8). New competition and market growth has taken place in national rather than European markets.¹ Thus, in pan-European television markets American English remains, and continues to grow, as the *lingua franca*.

Digital television in the context of Information Society and convergence

The European Union had only a secondary role in the liberalisation of the audiovisual sector². In telecommunication markets, on the other hand, the EU has been the most active and successful promoter of marketization, as stated

in the Commission's own report (COM, 2000:814). In the late 1990's, discussion on the audiovisual sector has often been subordinated to discussions on telecom, the so-called Information Society [IS], and digital convergence.

After at least two decade's active discussion on IS and knowledge-based technology as a factor of economic growth, the 1990's finally saw the rise of public IS-strategies. In 1993 an extensive National Information Infrastructure Program (NII 1993) was launched in the USA, and a similar strategy was published in Japan. The European Commission White Paper, *Growth, Competitiveness and Employment* (COM, 93:700), followed soon after.

The general IS strategies of the EU were interwoven with the idea of media convergence – the technological and economic integration of telecommunications with broadcasting networks. Especially evident in the Bangemann Report (1994), convergence was construed as a process for opening new market opportunities in a manner that necessitates accelerating the process of media liberalisation.³ This position was further developed in the report titled *Public Policy Issues Arising from Telecommunications and Audiovisual Convergence*, which the Commission ordered from the consultant company, KPMG, in 1996. Similar ideas filtered into the EU Green Paper on convergence (COM, 97:623) which elaborated the idea of a more 'technology-neutral' approach to competition regulation as better than sector-specific content regulation. The viewpoint of the Commission hinged on the belief that avoiding market distortions in the developing new media markets makes it mandatory for the EU to minimise its regulatory interventions (Levy, 1999: 129-130).

In line with the Bangemann report (1994: 12-13), the first EU policy documents considering digital television stressed the single market mantra. The emphasis stressed *common pan-European standards* as the essential precondition for harmonious pan-European market evolution (Council Resolution 1994). In spite of all this 'common markets and common standards' rhetoric, actual EU regulation has taken a very different course. (For a critical analysis on the European IS and media policy rhetoric see Goodwin & Spittle 2002 or Kaitatzi-Whitlock 2000; for a more positive view see Ward 2001).

Digital television and missing single markets standardisation

Although single market standards have been the official goal of EU audiovisual policy, the first piece of regulation tailored to digital broadcasting did little to address that. The Advanced Television Standards Directive (ATSD 1995) was drafted in a way that could not facilitate the emergence of a single European digital TV market supported by common standards. The directive stipulated that the member states should promote the accelerated development of DTV (*ibid.* article 1), but gave no clear guidance on standards. The directive instead gave the DTV operators liberty to create propri-

etary Conditional Access Systems [CAS] and combine them with an Application Programming Interface [API] and was only requiring that they licence their technology to other operators “on fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory terms” (ATSD 1995, article 3c).

It was soon glaringly apparent that the lack of common standards in these ‘middleware solutions’ created a technology bottleneck. Different API and CA systems, which must be installed in the set-top box [STB] receiver, makes it impossible for digital television viewers to access all the digital channels available on the market with one receiver. In practise, this has been a rather efficient obstacle to developing a pan-European digital television market and created potential competition problems too (Nolan, 1997; Llorens-Maluquer, 1998; Galperin, 2002).

The immediate reason for this non-regulative policy was that standardisation issues for digital television were consigned to the Digital Video Broadcasting Project, an industry-led European consortium of over 300 broadcasters, manufacturers and operators (see www.dvb.org). Although the project group had succeeded splendidly in creating common European transmission standards for satellite, cable and terrestrial broadcasting by the end of 1993, the standardisation of API and CA systems proved far more difficult. In these areas the project group couldn’t surmount pre-existing conflicted interests among broadcasters. It was, notably, in the interest of pay-TV satellite broadcasters to extend control over their existing customers in the transition from analogue to digital markets, not to open the market to new competitors via open standards solutions (Galperin, 2002; Levy, 1997: 667-671).

Although the prospects for voluntary industry consensus on API and CA systems faded, the Commission refused to intervene. The absence of middleware software standards therefore meant that although broadcasters could *transmit* their digital signals across Europe, audience *access* to those signals would be strictly limited to households equipped with the ‘right’ set-top box. As a practical result, European DTV markets have fragmented into rival blocks operating incompatible STBs *even within* the same national or linguistic market.

This industry-led standardisation policy has roots in previous failures in EU-led television standardisation. The efforts to build a common European standard for analogue High Density Television [HDTV] through the so-called MAC Directives and subsidies for wide screen production between 1986 and 1993 failed in spectacular fashion. Satellite broadcasters refused to adopt that standard at the dawn of digital technology, and the EU was unable to maintain its policy when faced with such obstinate commercial opposition. By 1992, the failure was acknowledged and the guiding principle of EU technology policy has since been to go with the grain of the market rather than to try to steer it (Levy, 1999: 68-79; McPherson, 2002: 83-84). We may ask if non-regulation is a good alternative for wrong regulation.

European digital broadcasting started in 1996 with DStv in Italy, Canal Satellite Numérique (CSN) in France, and Kirch Group’s DF1 in Germany –

each of which launched using independent middleware standards. The German case is particularly interesting. DF1 quickly found itself locked in competition with the digital channel offered by the Bertelsmann group, again using a different decoder model. Both firms failed to gain sufficient audience interest to realise commercial success. Only in light of this could Kirch and Bertelsmann agree to work together to launch a jointly owned pay-TV platform (Premiere), using the Kirch d-box technology. The European Commission, due to concerns about creating a digital “Bertelkirch” monopoly position, ruled against this otherwise rational move (Schoen, 1998; Dransfeld and Jacobs, 2000).

In Spain a different species of hardware war erupted when the Spanish government tried to force Canal Satélite Digital (owned by Canal+ and publishing house Prisa, associated with the Socialist party) to use the CA technology of the partly state-owned Vía Digital in a special law. This politically motivated action was prohibited by the Commission which saw it as a violation of Treaty rules (Llorens-Maluquer, 1998). Such hardware and middleware wars largely account for the lousy start and poor public reputation of European digital television.

In the UK and France the situation has been somewhat different, with several competing companies. But there, as well, the operators have been using incompatible decoders and digital terrestrial television is either in great difficulty or in its infancy. Meanwhile, the German Kirch group fled the arena in bankruptcy. For their part, the competing Spanish digital satellite platforms announced plans to merge in May 2002 after the collapse of the digital terrestrial operator, Quiero (Fernández, 2002).

A failure of policy and policy-makers

The cumulative evidence clearly indicates that public regulation and industry-led regulation have both chalked up many more failures than successes. Such weak European standard regulation for DTV technology suggests a lost opportunity. There was, in fact, ample opportunity for the EU to regulate needed DTV standards to facilitate the creation of a pan-European television market with increased consumer choices in services. They failed in this because European policy makers were too entangled in the illusory principles of minimalist regulation and glorified marketization, even while at the same time trying to ban monopolies via strict competition regulation. Moreover, policy makers in the member states, seemingly captivated by ‘early bird’ enthusiasms, were reluctant to slow the pace of digitalisation with domestic regulation and standardisation issues, and further too keen to protect the interests of broadcasting corporations operating within national territories.

The price tag for such widespread policy failures continues to mount. Not only has the opportunity been squandered to develop pan-European TV-

markets, but the situation has also made the production of interactive applications for DTV platform prohibitively expensive and risky because each must be tailored separately to fit different proprietary STB platforms. This will retard the development in interactive television applications for non-commercial public interest (and service) purposes and their option to easily travel across Europe.

Multiple standards are not only difficult for terrestrial free-to-air broadcasters who started digitalisation after the satellite companies, and thus enjoy none of the material benefits in controlling the proprietary set-top boxes as is the case for pay-TV companies. At the same time one finds that pay-TV operators have also paid for these mistakes and overheated market expectations, as the collapse of ITV Digital, Quiero and Kirch in Spring 2002 pointedly illustrate.

MHP – a new opportunity?

After noted difficulties and interminable delays, the DVB project group finally succeeded in creating an open API standard for digital television. This Multimedia Home Platform [MHP] standard, which uses open Java language code, was officially recognised by the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (www.etsi.org) in July 2000. As an open standards software platform, MHP could provide a common basis for pay-TV programmes, free-to-air programs, Electronic Programme Guides [EPG], Internet browsing and interactive services (see www.mhp.org). With MHP standard in the set-top boxes, interactive applications could be authored once and used in different hardware platforms. All in all, MHP could save costs in the production of ITV applications and enhance interoperability in the consumer platforms.

MHP has been especially embraced by German and Nordic TV operators and free-to-air terrestrial broadcasters. But the dynamics and problems already discussed at length persist. MHP does not interest the most important digital satellite broadcasters because, by now, they have gained substantial market shares with their proprietary middleware technology. This, in turn, means that hardware manufacturers aren't keen on MHP which also requires more processor efficiency and Flash/RAM memory from the STB hardware than was hitherto needed (Flynn, 2001). STB manufacturers have not been hurrying to start mass production of the MHP standard boxes, which again leaves terrestrial broadcasters in favour of MHP in the lurch.

Finland 'boldly' announced in 2001 that it would be the first European country to start digital broadcasting using the MHP standard. In practice this has gone badly because at the time digital broadcasting started (27 August 2001) there still weren't any MHP boxes on the consumer market. So the initiative has understandably been lampooned in the press, and this has seriously diminished the credibility of DTV in the eyes of the viewers.

The broadcasters can't rationally justify developing new MHP services which cannot be used in most of the 31,000 first-generation boxes sold by now (Oct 2002). Few rational consumers are willing to invest in a technology that may be outdated when the MHP boxes finally enter the market. To date, there is only one expensive integrated MHP television model on the Finnish market. Of the all together 13 channels licensed to start digital broadcasting, four have refused to start (all pay-TV channels), two (SubTV and the Sports channel) gain most of their audience in analogue cable, and the remaining channels, five of which are public service, mostly simulcast or recycle their analogue content in the digital platform. No wonder the consumer interest has remained modest.

The European Commission has been rhetorically supporting the MHP standard for two years, but it's only symbolic support. The communication from the Commission on *the principles and guidelines for the community's audiovisual policy in the digital age* promised that the Commission will closely monitor API standards development, but did not propose any specific action. Paradoxically, the rationale is that it would be unwise to do so "at this early stage when market and technological developments are highly unpredictable" (COM, 1999: 657, 15). This begs the question: Given the evidence, who is primarily responsible for this very unpredictability?

Meanwhile, demands for concrete action on the matter continue to grow. In early 2001 an independent report for the Commission suggested further support for MHP (OVUM, 2001: 6 & 26-28). In mid-December 2001 the European Parliament voted to accept a compromise deal on the EU Telecom Package meant to harmonise the regulatory environment for electronic communications. New directives include possibilities to implement compulsory standards when "strictly necessary" to ensure interoperability and to improve freedom of choice for users (COM, 2000: 393, 12 & 25).

In debating the telecom Package the German Members of Parliament especially wanted to include a clear mandate for the MHP standard in future STBs as part of the package, but UK representatives were against this, nor was such a mandate supported by the Commission. In the end, the Commission only agreed to communicate to Parliament, "*as soon as possible*", the concrete steps the Commission will take to ensure the rapid adoption of an interoperable and open system for digital TV services in the European Union (Paasilinna, 2001a, 2001b). Why do open API standards matter? Isn't it only about DTV technology and not the DTV contents?

As Milton Mueller notes (1999: 14) a process of settling upon common protocols and technical standards for data interchanges is a predominantly socio-economic process, not a technical one. In new media, technological software standards create an important part of infrastructure that affects both consumer access to the media services and producer access to the content authoring tools. To a certain extent, discussion on the open STB-API standard can also be compared to the open source discussion related to Linux software in PC's and Internet servers. As Tuomi (2001) argues, the open source

code does not necessarily guarantee a better software technology, but it may include other kinds of benefits like active communities of learning and innovation in developing the software applications, or reasonable prizing for end users. (See also DiBona et al. 1999.)

Without common standards for interactive applications the interactive potential of European DTV is greatly diminished for shopping channels, interactive advertising and pay television niche programming – just as critical views predicted (Kleinstauber, 1998; Østergaard, 1998: 105). With incompatible standards for interaction the very best one can hope for is more television, not better or ‘enhanced’ television.

Within the next couple of years we will know if there is enough policy support for MHP from regulators and broadcasters. For the moment, however, one is left wondering (and perhaps worrying) if it is already too late to seize this second chance. It may well be that the legacy of already installed incompatible set-top boxes (over 30 million units) will make full decoder interoperability a long, difficult and potentially impossible process for European DTV operators and consumers.⁴

The remit of media regulation

Interoperability issues in digital decoders and interactive services are not the only important question for the future regulation of DTV in Europe. After all, it may well be that because of the ‘cultural inertia’ and the lack of competence in both production and reception, interactive television services will not be of great social interest or importance anytime in the near future. There are also many other future regulatory questions of related importance to be simultaneously faced in deliberations about the forthcoming revision of the TVWF directive (1989/1997). This was actually supposed to happen in late 2002, but will probably be postponed (see Reding 2002). Future regulatory challenges also include new forms of interactive and virtual advertising, as well as Customer Relations Management systems implemented in the set-top box. One would also include ‘listed events’ policy, European content quotas, analogue broadcasting switch-off strategies, spectrum allocations, national public service remit definitions and the role of the EU in the WTO negotiations, where the further liberalisation of the audiovisual services is still on the agenda.

Thus, when considering the future development of DTV it is quite insufficient to merely count the slowly increasing figures of ‘digital penetration’. The primary question to be addressed is what kind of digital broadcasting is needed to best benefit European publics? The role of DTV should be considered in the context of Information Society development as well, focusing on the importance of open access to free-to-air public services that are platforms for democratic debate. It is surprising that the relationship of DTV to

the Internet or the public IS services are only (and then only briefly) referenced in some of the EU documents. This is never analysed in detail. Public service programming and services should be guaranteed in the various platforms before and after digitalisation with, for example, well defined *must carry* rules.

It is also quite clear already that future challenges are so sweeping that the 'light touch' regulatory approach will not be adequate. There is immediate and pressing need for political motivation in sector-specific and time-specific media regulation, and not only cross-sectoral market regulation. The depressing chronicle of European failures in digital television middleware standards proves that sector specific regulation *is still* urgently needed. There are issues involved that are too complicated and technical to be resolved on an exclusively cross-sectoral basis. A clear division of regulatory responsibilities at the national, European and even more international level is also needed.

European politicians – and the EU Commission in particular – should have already learned from hard won experience that regulation is not inherently harmful to business, industrial claims notwithstanding. On the contrary, there is a strong case for accepting the proposition that regulation is desperately needed by commercial market actors too, especially those that can't monopolise the market. Stuart Prebble, the former chief executive of ITV Networks, made the point in his article in the *Sunday Telegraph* only days after the collapse of ITV Digital. Without avoiding due self-criticism, he also blamed the missing and arthritic regulatory actions in the UK for failing to prevent the BSkyB enterprise from eliminating its competition (Prebble, 2002). As often noted but frequently ignored, wise public regulation and state intervention are enabling factors in economic process too.

There is recent evidence of slight policy shifts away from marketization principles in the European Union. But at least for Viviane Reding, Commissioner for Education and Culture, adherence to neo-liberal ideology is amazingly firm. She indicates unwavering faith in self-regulation for the protection of consumers and questions *any* need for European content quotas in TVWF directive "in a digital world where electronic content is *limitlessly* available". If it really were limitless, one might more easily digest the proposition. Sadly, however, this treatment indicates significant limitations. She remains obstinate to avoid over-regulation that, she fears, *might* hinder the development of the market and harm Europe's competitiveness. (Reding, 2001, 2002). But as the case of DTV standards demonstrates, non-regulation has factually already impeded this very same development on the market.

Cross-sectoral competition regulation is an important tool for market regulation. That is understood and accepted. But a very strong case can be made for the proposition that it isn't nearly enough. The revered case law tradition has to date demonstrated that it is too slow a mechanism to efficiently handle the rapid and sweeping changes involved with digitalisation. To resolve the problems highlighted in this chapter surely demands that one first

admit the problems in and limitations of neo-liberal market-led de-regulation in order to find appropriate regulatory solutions to benefit publics, industries and governments alike.

Notes

1. The European Commission has estimated that in 1999 the share of US import on the audiovisual markets of the member states was between 60 and 90 percent with a total value of 7000 million Euros, while the share of European import on the US markets was only 1-2 percent (COM(1999)657, p. 7).
2. The marketization of the audiovisual media developed in the early 1980's through national decisions, which ended the era of public service monopoly in broadcasting. The European Union has at any rate heavily supported and further developed this trend. Neo-liberal marketization has clearly been in the foreground in the European media and telecom policy since the mid 1990s.
3. Interestingly Bangeman report paid only little and somewhat critical attention to the Internet, which a few years later was considered to be a new medium which "best embodies the digital revolution" (COM(1999) 657, p. 5).
4. Globally there will of course be different standards even in the transmission of DTV signals. American terrestrial DTV is using 8-VSB signal modulation, including an option for digital high definition television [HDTV] but using the bandwidth less efficiently than the European DVB-standard based on COFDM modulation. The Japanese have a system of their own called IDSB. But the DVB-standard is becoming the most used in global terms.

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The Public/Private Tension in Broadcasting

The Canadian Experience with Convergence

John D. Jackson & Mary Vipond

Canada's *Broadcasting Act* designates Canadian broadcasters, public and private alike, as a *single system* to which the Act and all subsequent regulations apply. The Act is based on the premise that the airwaves are public property, but allows for the existence of a private sector within the whole (Canada, 1991). Thus does it signal: (1) the tension between the public good and private gain; (2) the fact of a particular relation between private and public broadcasting in Canada; and (3) the possibility that the relationship may simultaneously address issues of national sovereignty and benefit capital accumulation. These themes will be placed in the context of Canada's economic culture and the current process of corporate convergence. Though convergence is presently taking place on several fronts – across media platforms, within media platforms, and across distribution technologies – we concentrate on the first of these and on the implications for the public remit.

The convergence of broadcasting, production, distribution and print raise two important issues. First there is a very real anxiety over the possibility that cross-media convergence will reduce the variety of voices expected from an open broadcasting system (public and private alike). Secondly, there is concern that national and regional public broadcasting units may, in the end, carry the principal responsibility for ensuring a multiplicity of voices. Indeed, and somewhat ironically, national public broadcasting may well be the sole defence against monopoly. Convergence within specific media platforms, across media platforms, and across modes of delivery has reduced the sheer number of independent and competitive players in the market. In so doing the process has moved toward monopoly conditions and homogenisation of content.

Though convergence is global in scope, the process and response varies according to the role of particular states with respect to capital in general and broadcasting in particular. This must be taken into account if the various paths open to public broadcasting are to be located and evaluated. Central to our argument, therefore, is the proposition that the processes of convergence, the relations between private and public broadcasting, and regula-

tory regimens evolve from *specific economic cultures*. Though globalisation may well, in the long run, lead to the homogenisation of social organisation and cultural practices, we suggest that in the process states will retain a relative autonomy. That autonomy makes necessary particularity in the analysis of convergence, itself a concomitant of the current phase of capital accumulation and globalisation.

With this premise in mind, we first develop a general framework for analysis, define the concept of *economic culture* and accent the distinctive socio-economic contradictions manifest in Canadian society. Secondly, this will set the matrix of structures and practices within which we examine the development of Canadian broadcasting, originating, as it did, in a very early convergence of private and public interests. One might note in contrast that in European states private broadcasting generally followed public services, and, in many situations, not until the mid-1980's (Alm and Lowe, 2001: 369). Finally, we look at the current situation and position public broadcasting accordingly.

The state & economic culture

The general model requires that we address the role of the state in advanced capitalism. Here we have drawn from earlier work on Canadian political economy (Innis, 1956: 62-90; Panitch, 1977). The arguments advanced by Panitch are, in turn, tied to debates opened by O'Connor (1973) and, more recently addressed by Leys (2001: 108-211) in his examination of the BBC and the National Health Service. We open with the assumption that the state in advanced capitalism must meet three principal functions: (1) the reinforcement of capital accumulation; (2) the creation and maintenance of the conditions of social harmony, or legitimation; and, (3) the monopolisation of the instruments of coercion (O'Connor, 1973: 6; Panitch, 1977: 8).

Functions (1) and (2) have a direct bearing on the issue at hand. With respect to capital accumulation, the state directs *social capital* to production in the private sector. In Canadian broadcasting this takes the form of infrastructure support through investment in broadband delivery systems and production support through such agencies as Telefilm Canada and the Canadian Television Fund. In part this type of indirect subsidy to private broadcasters came about through favourable regulatory arrangements. Arrangements which, for example, redirected funds from the CBC to the Canadian Television Fund which, in turn, funnelled support to independent, private sector production firms from which both public and private broadcasters purchased programming. Additionally, foreign ownership restrictions and other regulatory practices such as a reluctance to cancel licences allowed the industry to develop in Canada.

We should note that the concept, 'social capital', or expenses required for private accumulation (O'Connor 1973: 7), as used here, differs from its use

in current social policy discourse where it refers to “the trust that flows through social networks” (Rice and Prince, 2000: 210). Regarding legitimation costs, *social expenses* are incurred through direct funding to public broadcasting units at both federal and provincial levels (O'Connor, 1973: 6-10). This direct funding is a portion of the total social expenses of the state; remaining portions are directed to such areas as education and health care. In addition, public broadcasting receives direct funding from the private sector through advertising revenue and donations.

The contradictory practices that may arise in particular times and places among these functions are many. We need not elaborate that any move to assist the expansion of private broadcasting is, in effect, a reinforcement of capital accumulation. And also, on the other hand, that the creation and sustaining of public broadcasting, an apparatus designed to promote official culture and create the symbols of a common identity, fulfils a legitimation function. Given the overlap, an actual separation between social capital and social expenses and their respective functions is difficult to make. However, analytically an emphasis is placed upon functional differentiation and its policy implications. The relations highlighted are neither purely economic, nor political, but entail negotiations within a complex of economic, cultural and political interests and groups. As the state moves through the dialectical relations arising from these contradictory interests it at once frames and moves within an economic culture.

Economic culture

The term “economic culture” might be an oxymoron to some. Economics is viewed as a set of rational decisions embedded in supply/demand markets and oriented toward maximum returns on investments. Economics is ‘real’ while culture is subjective, embedded in language, symbols, values and ideologies. Real or unreal, not an argument we wish to entertain at this time, the inter-penetration of economic and cultural systems is well established in the literature (Habermas 1987: 301-403; Marx, 1947: 13-14; Parsons, 1960: 98-131) across several paradigms. Meanings, values, norms, beliefs – elements of cultural systems – penetrate economic systems (Parsons, 1961: 34-36). Economic practices feed back into cultural systems, creating a discursive synthesis, at once cultural and economic. The descriptive terms of economics – supply, demand, markets, investment – give meaning to and frame decisions and subsequent action in particular economic cultures.

The emphasis on ‘particular’ is important. The economic cultures of given states, though broadly similar insofar as they share in the historical movement of capitalism, vary according to specific conditions surrounding their own development in time and place. Contradictions specific to time and place frame the playing out of state functions and the development of a discursive synthesis around economic practices. The clash among interests and groups to funnel money toward the legitimation of society or to capital accumula-

tion coalesces around ideologies in the name of economics and well being. Values underlying perceived and real needs regarding entertainment, education and health are interwoven with policy questions regarding public broadcasting and its significance or lack thereof to the society as a whole.

Public broadcasting may be perceived by a particular political/economic interest as a means for promoting national definitions of self. While another interest might perceive it as contrary to greater economic freedom. One interest might perceive broadcasting and its content as a commodity for private gain, another as a public good. Just how these positions and contradictions play out will vary considerably from state to state. Thus, the *economic culture* of a given state expresses the totality of the system of relations. In this respect we propose a set of continua which represent the core of Canadian economic culture, specifically relevant to its broadcasting history and the role of public in relation to private broadcasting.

Axes of Canadian economic culture

State and economic practices in Canada may be read as the manner in which the state meets capital accumulation and legitimation functions, and the interaction between the practices emanating from these functions. Such responds to the positioning of corporate entities, political institutions and competing interest groups along private/public, regional/central and continental/national continua (Jackson, 1995). We visualise the continua in interaction around a central point. Theoretically, a move toward the nationalist pole on one axis tends to trigger a move toward the centralist and public enterprise poles on the other two. A move toward the continentalist pole will tend to trigger a move toward the regionalist and private enterprise poles on the other two. The use of continua implies, first, that the polar positions are ideal types, and, second, that the structure as a whole is continuous rather than discrete.

Movement along the three axes responds to and also constrains the limits of policy decisions with respect to budget allocations, the question of advertising, regional and network production emphasis and so on. This suggests, for example, that a shift toward the private pole on one continuum is accompanied by a shift toward the continental on the other. Additionally, a strong regional position on a given issue is likely to move the marker toward the private enterprise pole on the private/public continuum. Shifts to the public and national, at the federal level, tend to emphasise the legitimation function; shifts to the continental and private poles, the capital accumulation function.

The story of broadcasting in Canada is entrenched in these contradictory movements along the proposed continua. Convergence in the industry and the concomitant remit of public broadcasting unfolds in this setting. Our analysis is thus limited to a specific state, a necessary limitation. Capitalism

and globalisation may be universal, but specificity is required in order to understand local or national variations. The matrix comprises Canadian economic culture: i.e., the totality of practices and institutions which have evolved over time and which organise discourse and activity around capital accumulation and legitimation.

With this in mind, we turn to a brief historical overview emphasising both the factors unique to the development of Canadian broadcasting and those that are relevant to current developments in Europe. The three most salient aspects of the Canadian situation in relation to the axes are: a) the vast size and relatively small population of the country; b) the fact that private broadcasting preceded the introduction of public service broadcasting and continued to co-exist alongside it; and c) the propinquity of the United States. The latter has given Canadian audiences access to the technically and professionally more advanced products of American broadcasting since the 1920s. These three factors explain many of the differences between the situation in Canada and in most European countries; the latter two, however, also bear directly on issues of corporate and public/private convergence and “Americanisation” that currently preoccupy many Europeans.

Historical overview

Broadcasting in Canada began as private enterprise (Peers, 1969; Vipond, 1992). Early station owners were mainly manufacturers, newspapers and retailers desiring spin-off sales or publicity. With little incentive to invest large amounts and weak advertising revenues, most radio stations in the 1920s transmitted at low power, and could be heard only locally. Thus private-enterprise broadcasting developed from the first as a community-oriented medium similar to the newspaper. The stations in the main cities in each province also became the ‘voices’ of the rural communities surrounding them. In this sense they were not just local but regional stations, fostering regional over national interests.

At the same time, there was considerable pressure to utilise radio’s potential as a national medium. Governments, advertisers, broadcasters and listeners alike perceived that radio’s ability to construct a national audience for simultaneous listening was probably its most important attribute. By the late 1920s it was clear that networking was the most feasible method to achieve national coverage. But in a country as large as Canada with a limited population financing such networks was problematic. Moreover, most Canadians could listen without much difficulty to the hugely powerful, highly sophisticated broadcasting stations and networks of the United States. Radio station and network development in the United States was spurred by desire of the large electrical manufacturers to sell their equipment. In Canada, the manufacturers were for the most part subsidiaries of American firms; they had no incentive to set up

stations in Canada because they knew that most Canadians could easily hear the high-powered stations situated south of the border.

Thus the potential of this new communications medium to create a national listening community was not being fulfilled in Canada under private enterprise ownership. Not only did that mean that radio remained resolutely local and regional in its orientation, but also that it was potentially continental – that is, it might well be swallowed up in the powerful American radio system. Along two of our axes, then, there was a missing element. The national/continental axis lacked the “national” element. And the solution implicated the private/public axis, also missing one element. To the ‘private,’ some began to argue, must be added the ‘public,’ precisely in order to create the ‘national.’

All the elements of the Canadian broadcasting system were in place by the late 1920’s, albeit in the very early stages of articulation. While convergence across media platforms – newspapers and radio stations – was present at the start, Canada for the most part lacked the more profitable convergence across corporate entities – manufacturers and networks. Canadian radio at this point was at once regional and continental. This latter fact stimulated the appearance of interest groups prepared to lobby for broadcasting as a ‘nation-building’ legitimization mechanism.

Public broadcasting recommended

While throughout the 1920s the development of Canadian radio was supervised by a federal government agency, at the political level radio was barely on the radar screen. All this changed suddenly in 1928, when a regulatory decision shutting down some religious stations led to the creation of a Royal Commission to investigate all aspects of radio broadcasting, including the issues of under-financing, lack of networking and American penetration (Raboy, 1990).

Sir John Aird, the Chairman of the Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting appointed in the fall of 1928 was the president of one of Canada’s largest banks. As a banker, he was linked historically with the mercantile capitalists who had developed the Canadian economy as a trading economy based on shipment of raw materials to markets in Europe. Throughout the Nineteenth Century, these merchant capitalists had allied with the state to develop the canals, railways, wholesaling, insurance and banking firms necessary to the development of a national economy (Clement, 1975). Aird embodied this characteristic of the “old” economy.

By the end of the 1920s, however, the vast majority of Canadian trade was moving along a north-south axis to and from the United States, and an increasing proportion of the growing manufacturing sector (including, as just mentioned, electrical manufacturing) was financed by or actually owned by American corporations. By the time radio began to develop, to the distress

of the old Canadian elites, the national economy based on exports overseas was rapidly becoming a continental economy dependent on exports to the United States. Enter “defensive expansionism” as a component of the rapidly changing economic culture.

Aird’s bias, and that of the other members of the Royal Commission, was toward protecting Canada from Americanisation by co-ordination between capital and state (Aitken, 1959). It is therefore not surprising that they concluded that extreme measures must be taken to ensure that Canadian radio broadcasting prosper, and that it remain in Canadian hands. The Royal Commission’s *Report*, issued in late 1929, concluded that Canadian private enterprise radio would inevitably fall into American hands. The Commissioners recommended the creation of a national “public utility” that would own and operate all Canada’s broadcasting stations. Seven high-powered stations would be built at scattered intervals across the country to create a national network. The previously existing private stations would be shut down, with compensation. The Commission’s recommendations rested on the assumption that radio must not be only an entertainment medium but also a means of creating and fostering national unity and identity. Given the scarcity of resources, duplication of services could not be afforded. Radio must be a monopoly, and in the hands of the government.

While the Commission’s recommendations represented one strain in Canadian society, they were in tension with another world-view that also had considerable historical credence. Canadians have, for the most part, shared a liberal ideology with their American neighbours. This ideology assumes that the least government is the best, that private enterprise provides prosperity for all, that free speech is essential to democratic debate, and therefore that cultural and intellectual institutions should be in private hands (Vipond 2000). Certainly there was no precedent in either country for a national media institution to be solely owned and operated by the government.

The web of tensions that would dominate broadcasting policies to the present was thus in place. The particular role of the Canadian state, with respect to the accumulation and legitimation functions, was becoming apparent. The private/public tension was becoming well established in broadcasting, and the same with regard to the national/continental tension. The historical union between social and private capital in building infrastructure to insure dominance of east-west transportation and communication lines was breaking down as industrial capital developed along a north/south axis.

The introduction of public broadcasting

The Canadian Radio Broadcasting Act of 1932 was therefore a compromise. It created a public broadcaster, but did not give it a monopoly. Private stations continued to coexist alongside the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission [CRBC] and its successor the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

[CBC]. Nor was the public broadcaster given sufficient funds to erect the high-powered stations foreseen by the *Aird Report*. Instead, the CRBC set up only a few publicly owned stations; it created the desired national network by making affiliation arrangements with private stations from coast to coast. Although the public broadcaster was given all regulatory responsibility and the only national network, the affiliate arrangement placed public and private broadcasting in a symbiotic relationship, mutually dependent in a 'mixed' system. This is the system that prevails in Canada to this day.

By the end of World War II public broadcasting in Canada rested in a particular complex of political, cultural and economic relations informed by an overarching economic culture of state/capital interdependency. The CBC was the national broadcaster and regulator, a fact not favourably received by private broadcasters who were beginning to ride the wave of post-war consumerism. Audiences showed a continuing preference for American programs. The CBC's programming was ambivalent and dichotomous: Popular American programs co-existed with those that promoted a particular vision of Canada as a nation. And, in spite of the linkages between public and private broadcasting since the beginning, private broadcasters increasingly opposed the prominent position of the CBC in the field, notwithstanding the move in the private sector toward corporate consolidation and cross-media convergence.

The introduction of television in Canada was carefully controlled by the federal government, which at first allowed only one station per city, either owned by or affiliated with the CBC (Peers, 1979). Competing private television stations began to develop after 1958, mostly owned by those already in the broadcasting business. The privately owned television stations in Canada made most of their money by purchasing popular American television shows at bargain rates. Indeed even the CBC's television program schedule was heavily filled with American programming because popular demand and the obvious financial benefits could not be gainsaid. In 1960 the Board of Broadcast Governors, later to become the Canadian Radio-Telecommunications Commission [CRTC], the new body that had taken over regulatory duties from the CBC, introduced Canadian content regulations for television programming, regulations that still exist and are still evaded whenever possible by the private broadcasters. In exchange for this limitation, however, the private broadcasters were given a number of privileges, the most important being more or less permanent hold on their licences (Hardin, 1985). As had been the case since the 1930s, the state continued to foster the growth of the private industry whilst maintaining national public broadcasting.

Cross-media convergence

In the Canadian private sector today there are five major players, most of which have acquired their coverage and strength over the last four years.

CanWest Global now controls thirteen city dailies across the country and one newspaper distributed nationally. It controls one of the two private television national networks, six interactive sites, and two production services in film and video. Internationally it controls TV and radio networks in Australia, New Zealand, and Ireland as well as film production and distribution services in the UK and USA. *Bell Globemedia* controls wireless and standard telephone operations nationally and in three provinces, as well as in the far north. It controls satellite delivery systems and e-commerce sites. In addition it owns Canada's second private, national TV network and a major national daily. *Québecor Inc.*, a major international printing firm, is heavily invested in the pulp and paper industry, owns seven English-language and two French-language dailies, eight French-language book and magazine publishers, Vidéotron, Québec's cable and Internet provider, TV channels, and media investments in Europe, Asia, and South America. *Shaw Communications Inc.* and *Rogers Communications* (tied to AT&T) together operate the major cable delivery systems in English-speaking Canada, TV specialty channels, radio stations, satellite delivery systems and a national news magazine. These five, examples of robust convergence, control most of Canada's media properties.

Public broadcasting pales in the face of these giants. The *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation/Radio-Canada* [CBC/RC] is the country's national public broadcaster – a major corporation operating under a Board of Governors and CEO appointed by the federal cabinet and responsible to Parliament through the Minister of Canadian Heritage. Of its 1,172.2 million dollar operating costs for 1999-2000, 65.2 per cent was from parliamentary appropriations and 34.8 per cent from self-generated funds, principally TV advertising (there is no advertising on radio) and programme sales. CBC/RC delivers its programming in French and English via satellite, microwave and landline feeding 97 owned stations, 1,164 rebroadcasters, 27 private affiliates and 292 community broadcasters. In addition to the national broadcaster there are three prominent provincial public broadcasters supported by a combination of public funding, subscriptions and private support.

Private and public broadcasters, as noted above, operate under the *Broadcasting Act* and fall under the regulatory control of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission [CRTC]. The separation of private and public in the Canadian broadcasting industry is not clear-cut. Certainly the CBC/RC and the three provincial broadcasters are state owned and financed, though self-secured funds do come from advertising and private support. As mentioned above, the private sector has also historically received both direct and indirect subsidies from the federal government.

In these examples of corporate convergence, one intention is to enable a single reporter to produce a story for several different media (including the Internet) simultaneously. The fear, of course, is that this will reduce the multiplicity of voices and worldviews. The broadcast regulator, the CRTC, has agreed to these practices, requiring only that independent management

structures be maintained. But that is a requirement the CRTC has not been enthusiastic about enforcing. The CRTC seems to have been confused by these rapid developments and by the contradictions in its role. While both CTV and CanWest Global were given mild warnings about keeping the management of their print and broadcast newsrooms separate, in fact their consolidation will inevitably occur.

One problem is that the CRTC has no right to regulate newspapers. More importantly, we must remember that the CRTC has always tended to encourage the development of broadcasting as an industry rather than as a public good (Vipond, 2000). This tendency has been exacerbated in the current tempestuous climate. As of this writing in late 2001, a new Chairman has just been appointed to the CRTC; the position had been vacant for almost a year. The resulting paralysis seemed of little concern to the current government. Bewilderment and drift seem to characterise the key regulatory body in an environment, national and global, in which rapid transformations continue.

If not bewilderment, then, at best, ambivalence reigns along each of the axes. While encouraging private/public alliances in the interest of "good business sense," the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Sheila Copps, has also taken what appears to be a contradictory move on the international scene. In 1998, Copps hosted a meeting of her counterparts from twenty other countries concerned about how to sustain national cultures in a world of globalisation. The consequence was the creation of the International Network on Cultural Policy, which has subsequently met three more times, most recently in Lucerne. Forty-five countries now participate; needless to say, the United States, whose cultural dominance lies behind most of these countries' concerns, is not a member (Magder, 1999, August).

The public remit

At issue is not U.S. cultural dominance *per se* but, rather, the commodification of ideas, modes of debate, systems of thought, and instruments of dialogue; in a word, the vitality of public broadcasting. Commodification fundamentally changes social relations – relations heretofore based on reciprocity and expressivity are transformed into relations resting on instrumentality and private gain. The public domain becomes an unexploited potential market to global corporations (Leys, 2001: 211-212). In the process, resources previously allocated to social expenses in 'the national interest', however that may be defined, are shifted to social capital. In effect, the state reduces investment in the legitimation of society as it increasingly participates in the commodification of social relations.

The legitimation function of the state cannot withstand a total commodification of social relations. As health, education, and public broadcasting, to name but three domains of public activity variously organised

according to the economic culture of particular states, are fully commodified the very collective interests upon which societies rest are under threat. Over the last two decades the march toward commodification has increased considerably as global capital has sought to reduce social expenses and increase social capital. Can public broadcasting survive in Canada? Elsewhere? To answer, it must be admitted that public broadcasting is fundamentally an issue of values and governance. It is an issue of values insofar as it rests on the weight given to the public weal, and it is an issue of governance insofar as the state, however structured, must make decisions regarding the balance between legitimation and capital accumulation.

Thus is an affirmative or negative response a political act within a particular economic culture, not an abstract economic act or even “good business sense”. It is an ideological decision, one that will ultimately be decided within a complex system of interacting interests. A commitment to the affirmative requires a commitment to a concept of public goods – goods defined as beneficial to the society as a whole – not to market-place commodities but as properties held in common. Public goods not only nurture the citizenry, but also define the citizenry. Note too, that acceptance of the concept requires that ‘the consumer’ be replaced by ‘the citizen’ – the discourse changes. The concept of public goods does not negate private goods or consumer commodities, but it is a necessary starting point if one is to explore the role of public broadcasting.

In practice, values and policy decisions are imbedded in the economic culture of the state. Canadian economic culture, as we have tried to demonstrate, is grounded in a set of relations wherein the state and capital have combined to secure enterprises, largely, but not totally, specialised to the extraction and sale of resources – the commodity market. This, combined with the realities of Canadian geography and demography, set the stage for state/capital alliances in the establishment of transportation and communication infrastructure.

When the technology of broadcasting appeared it was certainly not unexpected that it would take shape within the established economic, political and cultural framework. Broadcasting, like education, health and welfare, also provided the means to enhance the state’s legitimacy. The dialectical relation, at times contradictory, at times complementary and at times ambivalent, between social capital and social expenses was manifest at the beginning as it is presently. Then as now, these relations are played out along the three axes: private to public; central to regional; and national to continental. The Ministry responsible tries to uphold “good business sense” while simultaneously calling for the exclusion of public goods from commodity definition. The communication conglomerates, moving, as they must, into global markets, forego local and regional broadcasting and so does the national public broadcaster.

In this contemporary economic culture and its dialectic of values, what role might public broadcasting take? There are trends in motion, trends that

might provide the route, and, ironically, these trends are a consequence of the very culture that threatens to destroy the concept of public goods. *On the negative side*, (1) NAFTA in which an overwhelmingly dominant partner, the United States, overshadows Canada and Mexico, makes it difficult for the latter two to resist commodification of public domains. The absence of parliamentary institutions at the trading level, as enjoyed by the European Union makes it all the more difficult. (2) The locally based conglomerates have suggested that they receive additional public support for production of Canadian content programming, thus reducing the amount available to the CBC, a call for the shifting of state resources from the public to the private pole. (3) There is a continuing pressure to "privatise" the CBC as well as the provincial public broadcasters. This call originates from two sources: from capital which defines public broadcasting as competitor and from within the public sector on the part of those seeking to shift funds to health care and education. (4) Parliamentary appropriations for the CBC have, in the long run, declined, though there is some sign of increased input.

On the positive side, (1) as broadcasting convergence in all its forms continues, the possibility of near-monopoly conditions in the private sector is very real indeed. The high debt load carried by the five majors in Canada and the decreasing return on investment in spite of increasing revenues certainly point in the direction of fewer players in the field. In this climate, public broadcasting may be the one remaining defence against monopoly conditions. (2) Co-operation between the CBC and the conglomerates, as contradictory as this may at first appear, is consistent with the economic culture and may present one way of sustaining the public sector. (3) Co-operation between the nationally based CBC and provincially based and funded public broadcasters may enhance regional and local broadcasting, an area of concern which the conglomerates and the CBC have all but abdicated. (4) The CBC and, to a lesser extent, the provincial public broadcasters have rapidly adopted Internet technologies and interactive components. The CBC has acquired digital television channels, placing it in a position to exploit present and future multi-media broadcasting.

To return to the premise upon which this presentation was based, discussions of the public broadcasting remit must be specific to the economic cultures of particular states. The public broadcasting remit in Canada, for example, cannot be built from a generic analysis of public broadcasting in the West, or from particular analyses focussing on the United States or the European Community. All share the problems of convergence, but the response of each is constrained by its own particular economic culture.

The response of Canadian public broadcasting is constrained by the positions historically taken with respect to the Canadian state's ambivalence along the three axes used in this analysis, which, in turn rests on the ambivalence rooted in choices around *social capital* and *social expenses*. Currently, the overall shift tends to be toward social capital and away from social expenses. Likewise, a vision based on the NAFTA agreement tends to draw

discourse and practices toward the private and continental poles on two of the three axes. In turn, this draws interests toward the regional on the central/regional axis. These trends do not bode well for public broadcasting. But, there are counter trends.

As mentioned earlier, corporate convergence is likely to continue as the current dominant players find themselves dealing with increasing debt loads. In addition, they have put their bets on digital speciality channels, which may or may not be successful, especially in the short run. The story of broadcasting convergence may run parallel to the transportation industry – a reduction to one or two players in the marketplace. This presents the national public broadcaster (as well as the three major provincial broadcasters) as the only defence against monopoly and a defence which can be articulated in the name of the public good as well as in the discourse of classical liberalism. This, in turn, will present a political opportunity to shift policy support to social expenses and to the national, regional and public poles on the three axes of Canadian economic culture.

With respect to public broadcasting in general, it is easier to state what cannot be done than to plot a route for sustaining it. To seek and maintain a complementarity between social capital and social expenses as imbedded in Canadian economic culture may succeed in other states. However, the possibility becomes less and less open to public policy as capital centralises globally and seeks to commodify the public domain. Altering program schedules and content, searching for new and increased audiences, and adopting digital and satellite technology are perhaps all to the good. These moves will not, in the end, set up a wall against commodification. What is required is a regulatory regimen based on an articulate doctrine of the role of public broadcasting in a democracy. This does not and should not negate private broadcasting, but should clearly state the values inherent in the public weal. Such a move is indeed a political act.

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The Discourse of Convergence

A Neo-liberal Trojan Horse

Tony Sampson & Jairo Lugo

In the age of the Internet and digital, it's certainly striking how durable our oldest types of television have turned out to be [...] public service broadcasting is a battle standard we no longer need to relay to – a redundant piece of voodoo.

- Michael Jackson,
Former Chief Executive of Channel 4 in the UK

Convergence is a 'slippery term' deployed as a political adjunct of neo-liberal economic policy, argues the former Member of European Parliament [MEP] and critic of convergence policy, Carole Tongue (2001)¹. Our assessment clarifies this deployment by the current Labour government in the United Kingdom. New Labour discourse divorces 'convergence' from its technical context and instead links it with neo-liberal ideology to justify media deregulation, ownership concentration and private participation in the sector. In our view this discourse of convergence paradoxically de-politicises the debate in an orchestrated attempt to legitimate these and related changes in media legislation. In opposition to these efforts, we argue that 'convergence' must instead be analysed as a social phenomenon with diverse implications that certainly warrant policy debate.

Our argument locates important elements of what we call the *discourse of convergence* in New Labour's designs for media policy. Firstly, we suggest the discourse will limit the participation and commitment of the State in regulating broadcasting and telecommunications. Secondly, we explore how the discourse seeks to open the media still further to market forces and the promotion of 'free market' values.

Although we recognise the powerful impact technological convergence is having on the media landscape, in this light we question the validity of such as the driving force. We therefore take a contrary view in arguing that new regulation is needed to preserve commitments to Public Service Broadcasting [PSB] within the emerging frame created by technological convergence. We further argue that the public needs to be aware of the political and economic

motivations underpinning New Labour discourse about convergence. This discourse of convergence is increasingly evident elsewhere in Europe and that underscores the importance of critical assessment of key constituent elements. This chapter seeks to help demystify the lines of argumentation.

New labour and the discourse of convergence

From the outset, the Blair government under the aegis of 'New Labour'² sought to link the concepts of 'convergence' and 'market' in a seamless discourse that treats economic regulation and content regulation as essentially indistinguishable. When asked by a select committee in 1998 if convergence was more a technical term than a market phenomenon, Barbara Roche, British Minister for Small Firms, Trade and Industry at the time, replied:

We [as a government] must have a coherent response. We shall seek to develop the principles of coherency in economic regulation and of consistency in content regulation.³

By situating 'convergence' in this context, New Labour⁴ signals their intentions to rationalise a media policy discourse wherein stimulating market competition appears to be inevitable. It's presumably necessary because there is no choice. When confronted with the post-electoral demands of two of its most important publics – the old left and media owners – New Labour's discourse undermines commitments to PSB in crafting this sophism of reconciliation.

In the European tradition, media regulation has sought to limit media concentration to partially guarantee content diversity and political pluralism⁵. In its *Report on Media Diversity in Europe* (2002), the Council of Europe reiterated the notion when suggesting that a strong PSB system "is necessary to maintain diversity in the European media market". But the discourse of convergence argues that regulation obstructs effective commercial decision-making, posited as a prerequisite for securing competitiveness in an overwhelming global market⁶. New Labour has sought to bridge such contradictions by suggesting that such competitiveness actually means pluralism, tenuously linked with a deepening of democracy, via widening consumer choice⁷.

The discourse of convergence is an ideological construction articulated by politicians and corporations to justify and promote their policy agenda in the public domain. It is the same discourse with the same arguments, symbols and constructions that paved the way for similar legislative changes in the mid-1990s in the United States⁸. New Labour's approach to communication deregulation coincided with its efforts to modernise as a political force which began as early as 1994⁹ (Kampfner, 2001). The trumpeted 'radical edge'

to achieve that modernisation was underpinned by the language of technological determinism that was pervasive in Labour's national conference in 1995 where Tony Blair spoke about 'waking up' to the challenge of the information superhighway.

This discourse of convergence responds to a specific dynamic comprised of actors and interests that represent a struggle to co-opt debate in the scientific community. This is no coincidence. Looking at key speeches, papers and other documents about the media issued by New Labour since 1995¹⁰, their discourse of convergence is intended to 'manage' this debate. Capturing the theme of convergence in a political context creates an illusion of reconciliation between society's interests and the party's pre-electoral compromises to media corporations. Effectively, then, the discourse of convergence is a non-democratic rhetorical device designed to obscure a close pre-electoral relationship between New Labour and powerful media conglomerates. Those pre-electoral agreements have been documented (Semetko, 2000; Herman & McChesney, 1999; Jones, 1999).

The 1998 Green Paper¹¹ titled *Regulating Communications: Approaching Convergence in the Information Age*, captured the Government's "preliminary views and reasoning on the likely implications of digital convergence for the legal and regulatory frameworks covering broadcasting and telecommunications", as framed by New Labour. Significantly, this document was issued through the Department of Trade and Industry [DTI] rather than through the traditional route of the Department of Media, Culture and Sport [DMSC]¹². Selling the discourse would presumably be more efficient if articulated by a department that has an obvious goal of paving the way for private investment in the telecommunications sector – rather than by an office focused on cultural and communications issues.

Although New Labour has lent rhetorical support to PSB, its policy emphasis stresses the need for private sector participation in order to strengthen the market by encouraging firms to merge and dominate sectors in the digital age. This policy direction echoes a goal of the former Conservative government, expressed by the 1986 Peacock Committee, to create a 'sophisticated market system based on consumer sovereignty' rather than public service goals (Home Office, 1986, p. 133). The Communications White Paper 2000¹³, the most important document regarding media policy in the UK issued recently, prioritises industrial policy and deregulation over citizen welfare and social cohesion. Its main objective is to "make the UK home to the most dynamic and competitive communications and media market in the world", a clear break with previous policies in which the main objective was to "guarantee public services access and diversity".

To reconcile the 'radical edge' of technological convergence with the traditional core of past years, New Labour elites embraced the so-called 'Third Way'¹⁴ as an ideological platform that justified (in the context of inevitable globalisation) changes in British media legislation. This construction frames Information Communication Technologies [ICT] as a driving force of the 21st

Century, posits new media as a defining element for an information society and the 'communications revolution', and suggests that the spread of information technology is 'deeply bound up with the process of globalisation'¹⁵.

After winning the 1997 UK elections and gaining powerful media support along the way, the Labour party – now controlled by the New Labour movement – positioned this 'communications revolution' as the heart of its vision for modern Britain. Consequently, this vision became an integral part of party ideology. This approach features an uncertain balancing act between an increasing role for private investment in the design and development of digital communications and the retention of public policy objectives that promise to widen access to close the 'digital divide'.

For the power-holders now articulating the Labour Party platform, convergence is axiomatic of universal and inevitable 'effects'. Intellectually, this worldview is presented as a technologically driven and historically linear series of *progressive* achievements. The resultant discourse has an apolitical flavour that is evident in its claims that technology is an autonomous force outside the parameters of societal influence¹⁶. This thesis of technological determinism enables the New Labour movement to side step reasoned political debate.

At least in part, the discourse of convergence is an attempt by New Labour to mobilise new media technologies to channel policy designs. This is nothing new or any invention of New Labour. Ironically, the so-called New Right in the 1980s, inspired by neo-liberalism and the monetarist policies of the Thatcher period¹⁷, took the same approach in harnessing emerging cable and satellite technologies to achieve similar ends. The New Right mobilised cable and satellite technologies to argue for 'more efficiency'¹⁸ through deregulation and in order to open television (which they considered to be dominated by the Left) to new commercial actors (Walters, 1989: 380-398)¹⁹.

But in such political discourse, New Labour has gone one better in successfully construing new media technology as an autonomous and inevitable dynamic that requires a new approach to regulation. The achievement provides New Labour an opportune discontinuity in the more properly social dynamics that define media history. The notion that technology development determines regulatory change is premised on an optimistic treatment of history. That history mobilises technological objects to represent an upbeat view of the future that too conveniently ignores social and cultural determinants, of late described by Murdock as a culture of marketization (Murdock, Wieten and Dahlgren, 2000: 35-58). Not only does technological determinism facilitate freeing media corporations from the social history of policy to support and justify commercial designs, it also smoothes New Labour's retreat from a defence of the public interest.

The discourse of convergence is fully supported by powerful media corporations. 'Being digital', said Rupert Murdoch, 'brings the endless possibilities of the future into a sharper focus' (cited in Negreponce, 1995)²⁰. Media corporations echo the pivotal importance of this discourse as an essential

element in their strategies to undermine regulation; it allows them to proclaim the pseudo-truism that media regulation is useless in a digital era – while quietly spending millions on lobbying to either influence or prevent legislation.

The discourse of convergence has been positioned at the core of a more comprehensive neo-liberal discourse that seeks to justify market-oriented capitalism as the framework of democracy. Its use by New Labour to argue for a new legal framework for British media reflects a technological determinism to justify a market-driven media system as an inevitable and global scenario where merging and converging is indistinguishable and PSB is presumably non-viable.

Why fix it if it ain't broken?

All of this strikes us as quite ironic when the United Kingdom has perhaps the most successful PSB model in the world. Policies governing public broadcasting in the UK became a role model for many countries and stand in sharp contrast with the commercial model developed in the United States²¹. With the emergence of the BBC, the concept of PSB became a clearly viable project even though the concept itself has always had detractors from both sides of the ideological spectrum²². Paradoxically, then, current changes in British media legislation are framed as though addressing a failed institution. Most changes have been justified by the so-called explosion of 'consumer choice' brought about by converging digital media formats and tenuously linked with the supposed inability of the PSB model to cope with the technological challenges.

New Labour favours 'light touch' regulation (Communications White Paper, 2000) and a *laissez faire, laissez passer* approach. The approach suggests that self-regulation and unrestrained market competition is the only way to secure the fullest democratic potential of new media. The discourse further suggests that media convergence will create new and better relationships between audiences and broadcasters. Digital media are therefore described as 'democratic media', and must inevitably replace traditional media structures and institutions to consequently enable forms of 'direct democracy'. As the argument goes, this will provide the public with 'control' and 'power' over the media through more interactivity, less mass media, and more individualistic relations.

In theory at least, technological convergence could increase market competition. But that does not automatically obviate the desirability of preserving PSB as an underpinning element of any comprehensive system. Neither does it inherently justify deregulation; such is factually imperative to harmonise technological standards and avoid fragmented media platforms. In point of fact, convergence requires regulation for practical and even commercial reasons, as well as to ensure that digital resource is managed fairly in the

public interest. There is scant evidence that market forces alone could guarantee such. Quite the reverse, actually.

Past and present experiences in many countries in recent years indicate that deregulation in the media sector is mainly of benefit for exploiting lucrative revenue streams, but with questionable benefit to the communities that constitute its markets²³. Nor is there evidence to support the view that technological convergence has much altered patterns of use for traditional media, or that it provides 'power' and 'control' for the public. Moreover, market trends associated with consolidation should have already demystified the notion that 'convergence' has any robust potential to foster pluralism and diversity. In reality convergence signals voracious demands for intensive capital investment that have to date resulted in lower than anticipated profit margins – all of which makes actually reduces competition and only creates concentration²⁴.

Confronted with this scenario, there is an argument to be made that only PSB has, in practice, been able to guarantee sufficient diversity in the mainstream media, which in turn suggests the need for a stronger regulatory role to absolutely guarantee the promise of free and universal access. Retreating from the facts is no service to the public, which is both market and electorate.

That hasn't happened yet, and sadly to date there is little indication that it might happen. On the contrary, in the discourse of convergence as it relates to digital television and radio services, PSB is defined less as a broadcaster and more as a content provider subject to the self-regulated interests of satellite and cable operators²⁵. When the BBC recently asked the satellite operator BSkyB for preferential fees for non-commercial PSB content, BSkyB chief executive Tony Ball ridiculed even the idea. Paraphrasing recent legislation and in accordance with convergence discourse, Ball said: ²⁶

This country [UK] has got the best growth and the strongest position in digital television anywhere in Europe. Why do we have that? Did we all wake up one morning and find it was there? Did the tooth fairy leave it under a pillow? No. (...) We [the private sector] make this investment in the platform and they expect us to give it to them for free. It's absurd. The public service broadcasters can't get their heads around that, they want some special dispensation.

Why these private satellite carriers that operate under British licence and enjoy quasi-monopolistic conditions were charging fees in the first place to PSB never entered the equation²⁷. But in response the BBC began developing and implementing a strategy to create free-to-air digital services in joint ventures with private corporations²⁸. Even if this approach achieves relative success the experience is sadly condemned to failure in the mainstream if private satellite and cable carriers are not required by law to carry the services²⁹.

The discourse of convergence has enabled media corporations and New Labour to push ahead with legislation in which there is very little PSB commitment from cable or satellite. As a continuation of the old legislative agenda

launched by the Conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major, new legislation has allowed a consolidation of the digital infrastructure into the concentrated hands of multinational corporations.

Within this situation, digital transmission of PSB content is becoming increasingly more reliant on commercial distributors³⁰, and as it becomes more a content provider rather than a broadcaster an important portion of its service community (i.e. public) is alienated. Indeed, contrary to rosy expectations proscribed by the discourse of convergence, there hasn't been any explosion in audiences. Instead, we find compelling evidence of a continuous erosion and fragmentation of audiences³¹.

Thus and contrary to what the discourse of convergence suggests, public service broadcasting is a key constituent of the modern public sphere and, irrespective of the rhetoric, digital technology has not altered the nature of broadcasting as a public space. Even if transmitted via satellite, cable or the Internet, PSB is still intrinsically situated in the public domain and therefore subject to the State's regulatory and policy authority. It is true that technological convergence makes government control of media dynamics difficult and that contemporary trends require a pragmatic and globally-aware revision of current legislation, but regulation remains the only mechanism by which a people can guarantee universal and balanced access to media services. Legislation should be broadened to incorporate the new players brought about by technological convergence. But those who broadcast dozens of digital channels are not inherently less accountable than those who used to broadcast a single analogue channel.

The remit and convergence

There is an underlying historical mechanism that encourages a long-term convergence across cultural boundaries, first and most powerfully in economics, then in the realm of politics and finally (and most distantly) in culture. What drives this process forward in the first instance is modern science and technology, whose ability to create material wealth and weapons of war is so great that virtually all societies come to terms with it. (Fukuyama 2001)

Fukuyama's insight highlights why convergence has become a key concept in the ideological discourse of neo-liberalism and how this transcends the media debate. In the realm of such discourse, convergence is construed as an end in itself; it is a tool for justifying a liberal-democratic model. Neo-liberal discourse relies on convergence to justify deregulation and to promote private 'participation' in the media sector while also weakening State commitment to PSB. The discourse of convergence works to de-politicise media debate and obscures a complex media environment actually comprised of many distinct bodies with different stakes, traditions and cultures.

The tangible policy manifestations of the discourse of convergence vigorously pursue deregulation and thereby by the relaxation of State commitments to public service media. It can only achieve this by divorcing the term from any socially determined context. In our view this is wrong-headed. Recent experiences in the UK illustrate that new regulation is the only means to truly guarantee widening participation and to actually ensure media diversity. The logic of the discourse of convergence obviously runs contrary to the logic of regulation³². But in doing so it ignores the fact that human interaction with technological objects, through cultural, economic, political and social intervention, defines the nature and necessity of media. Digital technology is a different platform for mediation services, but the principles inscribing how and why they are services for the public aren't inherently any different.

Notes

1. Interview with the former MEP Carole Tongue in London in February 2001.
2. After several electoral defeats the British Labour party has reinvented itself using as an ideological platform the so-called 'Third Way'. Re-branded 'New Labour' it intends to appeal to the middle ground electorate through a centrist-market view of Social Democracy.
3. Mrs. Barbara Roche, Minister for Small Firms, Trade and Industry in the European Standing Committee B, chaired by Mr. Peter Atkinson on Wednesday 8 April 1998 on Convergence of the Telecommunications, Media and Information Technology
4. Now in government after almost two decades of Conservative rule.
5. See also Michalis (2001).
6. The recent UK Communications Bill (2002) promises deregulation to promote competitiveness and investment and self-regulation wherever appropriate, backed up by tough measures to protect plurality and diversity. Nevertheless, we argue that deregulation and diversity are contradictory statements.
7. As stated in the Communications White Paper 2000 approved with some modification by the British Parliament.
8. This discourse had already entered the political rhetoric in the US with former Vice President Al Gore's keynote 'information superhighway' speech in 1994. Gore promised a 'new Athenian age of democracy' made possible by the 'global information highway'. Gore imagined 'a kind of conversation in which everyone who wants can have his or her say' (Robins & Webster, 1999: p.229).
9. As Kampfner (2001) writes: "Blair and his advisers spent the 1990s looking for a new ideology. It was not enough simply to portray the Third Way as the middle ground between the free market and socialism. A radical edge was deemed essential and modernisation was seized on as the underpinning theme".
10. A wide number of official documents were analysed by the authors, but for reasons of space could not be referenced in detail in this paper. Most of these documents are available at The Stationery Office at <http://www.tso.co.uk>.
11. Green Papers are first proposals of governments for new legislation in the UK.
12. Further blurring the distinctions between the market, the technology and the broadcast medium with its emphasis on the 'transactional capability of digital technology...' and its potential to '...carry out a number of familiar activities, such as banking, buying and selling in association with traditional products such as broadcast television' (DTI, 1998). Indeed, the Green Paper proposed a new media model, which stresses the importance of the role of the Internet in modern media and how the processes of technological

- convergence erodes 'the traditional distinctions between telecommunications and broadcasting' (DTI, 1998).
13. A derivation of the former Green Paper and now the foundation of the approved Communications Bill.
 14. See Giddens, A (1994). *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics*. Polity London.
 15. *Giddens, A 1998, The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy. Cambridge Polity Press p.31.*
 16. These discursive elements were observed also by Goodwin & Spittle (2002 pp.225-249).
 17. In 1986 The Peacock Report, commissioned by Thatcher's Conservative government to locate alternative funding for the BBC, but rejecting advertising, and the 1990 Broadcasting Act led to radical changes for television in the UK.
 18. The media moguls Eddie Shar and Rupert Murdoch took full advantage of a severely weakened union (a result of the Thatcher governments new legislation on industrial relations) to install new technological processes resulting in one of the most violent industrial exercises of the Thatcher years.
 19. Before Thatcher the Labour party in the late 70s started to look in the same direction. As James Curran (cited in Collins and Murrone, 1996 pp. 1-17) points out, the Annan Report of 1977 began a process of abandoning the assumption of the public good in broadcasting by looking to competition in the market place.
 20. Rupert Murdoch's comments on the 1995 hardback edition of *Being Digital* by Nicholas Negreponete. Published by Hodder and Stoughton.
 21. A historical analysis of the broadcast medium suggests that a similar criterion was argued for in the past. For many politicians and legislators of the first half of the 20th Century, regulation and control of radio waves appeared to be ineffectual. American legislators adopted this approach and saw many parallels between broadcasting and other industries, hence the *laissez faire*, *laissez passer* response towards the emergent phenomenon. The response in the UK was very different. From the beginning, several British legislators and political leaders saw broadcasting as a public service and the debate was influenced by the fact that technological developments are socially shaped and therefore it is possible to legislate and design politics to regulate them; needless to say that this position contrasts sharply with the current approach.
 22. The main criticism centres on the dilemma of 'who regulates the regulators' and that PSB can be used as a propaganda tool by governments. This is similar to the view of those on the Right who view public service broadcasting as institutionalised, paternalistic, elitist and managed by 'snobs' (an expression used by Rupert Murdoch to describe critics of the tabloid press).
 23. The US and Australia being the most notorious examples.
 24. This is clear from an analysis of the value and composition of technological stock market at NASDAQ in the past three years.
 25. Certainly, the satellite and cable spectrums are not publicly regulated and are dominated entirely by private and market-oriented rules.
 26. The Guardian, November 4, 2002.
 27. When other private content provider, ITV, lodged an official complaint against the •26m fee BSkyB charges the channel to appear on its pay TV network the case was rejected. The key here is that in this case the broadcasters no longer deal with government bodies, but with agencies more preoccupied with expanding the telecommunications infrastructure. Namely Ofitel –the telecommunication body- in accordance with the new legislation.
 28. Including BSkyB.
 29. Paradoxically in many countries in which the cable and satellite system is based on the US-model, there is the obligation by operators to carry community channels for free.
 30. News International, in order to consolidate its position with its Star network in China, dropped the BBC signal in order to please communist authorities. This could have pro-

- found implications in the long term, since now the carriers are the ones dictating the content rules.
31. Worse still is the concern that the British government will not meet its target of 95% of homes with digital television by 2010. This is perhaps one of the most evident weakness of the current legislation proposal by the current British government and in a type of Kafkaian twist it been suggested that the government might be willing to give away free digital television sets to its poorest citizens.
 32. Interview with Julian Petley from Brunel University.

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Television in Russia

Is the Concept of PSB Relevant?

Elena Vartanova & Yassen N. Zassoursky

In the traditional Western discourse on commercial and public service broadcasting, little attention was given to the state TV model which was present in many countries of the 'Socialist' block, and in many Asian states as well. Strictly speaking, public service broadcasting [PSB] is not a common concept shared and implemented by different countries in a similar way, but rather a continuum that implies different modes of interaction between the society, audience, state, and social institutions. In many European countries – France, Germany, Netherlands, Finland, Spain, – PSB practices indicate varying degrees of control and interference from political forces, governments and state agencies (Weymouth and Lamizet, 1996, Euromedia Research Group, 1997).

The model of Western European PSB provides clear evidence that the state as a social agent is not an entirely antagonistic force to public service. On the contrary, "some forms of accountability to (political representatives of) the public, other than through market forces", was traditionally considered a key public service element (McQuail & Siune, 1998: 24). This has led to the acceptance of some forms of content regulation embodying positive and negative criteria which, in turn, were shaped by the need to serve the *public interest* more than commercial, political or consumerist interests of society and audience. In Western Europe, there were fierce tensions between the goals set by 'society' in relation to the public interest and demands of the audience as consumers (McQuail, 2000:157).

Dissimilar to this, post-Socialist societies experienced another tension paradigm. Under new names as public service broadcasters, former state broadcasting monopolies have been put under subordination to local political elites which, in turn, attempted "to ensure that broadcasting developed in the desired direction" (Sparks, 1998: 162). The particular case of debates about potentials of public service broadcasting and the development of TV in post-Soviet Russia has illuminated many vital issues in the PSB debates. Soviet broadcasting was, from its very inception, non-commercial. The dan-

gers of commercialisation started to be felt only in the 1990s with the massive introduction of advertising. But the concept of *public* radio and television was compromised via its connection in many minds with the continuation of state control and the subordination of the interests of the audiences to the Government. The pervasive Soviet concept of television as an instrument of power made Russian media and the public elite cynical about independent public bodies, and thus deprived them of credibility from the start of the debate.

Historically, the dual State/Communist party dominance was the key feature that distinguished the Soviet television model from the two alternative models, e.g. the US privately owned commercial model and the Western European public service model. In present Russian circumstances, the state still maintains strong relations with national TV channels, demonstrating the existence of a 'third way' model. The state TV or, more accurately the state-controlled TV, reflects specific realities of the Russian political situation in which the role played by TV is mostly assessed through its manipulative potentials in election campaigns. More generally, in Russian circumstances the definition of 'state' is often used to mask the influence of 'the government of the day' and new political and financial elites known in the Russian context as 'oligarchs'. This is evident both at national and regional/local broadcasting markets where federal and local authorities, together with corporate business, exert fierce pressures on local TV companies.

This chapter is devoted to the development of TV in post-Soviet Russia. The old system of state owned, state funded, state and party controlled broadcasting has collapsed. The 1990 Media Law opened the way for non-state and private broadcasting. We aim to analyse the process of conceptualising new approaches in Russia to broadcasting and its relationship with the state, public and private capital, new ways of funding, and new programming concepts determined by these new circumstances.

Broadcasting in Russia (1991 – 2001): Ups and downs of the PSB concept

In the last decade, the Russian TV landscape has changed fundamentally. At the time of the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, all TV channels were owned, financed and controlled by the state broadcasting monopoly – the State Committee for Broadcasting (*Gosteleradio*). It broadcast on five national TV channels, with two having almost universal geographic coverage. The First Channel was received by 99,8% of all households in the USSR and had a generalist programming scheme with a strong emphasis on news and current affair programmes. The Second channel (95% of population) transmitted documentaries, children's and cultural programmes, TV drama, and provided regional content from regional branches of the *Gosteleradio*. The Third

and the Fifth channels had a particular regional focus on Moscow and St-Petersburg, respectively. The Fourth channel broadcast educational programmes for school children on specific school topics, and for adults as well.

The Soviet radio system had an even more diversified structure, aiming at universal coverage of the entire USSR territory and offering a variety of radio programmes targeted to different social groups, ages, and audience tastes. Technically, radio was widely spread throughout the country: Gosteleradio broadcast over 14 national and many local channels, providing diverse programming for mass and segmented audiences. Although radio was strictly controlled by the Party and various state agencies, there was a certain degree of impartiality and free thinking. The popularity of humorous and music entertainment, programmes for children of different ages, and radio theatre was high compared with political radio programmes. Cultural and art radio programmes made important contributions in the promotion of Soviet 'high culture' among the population (Sherel, 2000: 72-78).

It is clear that the Soviet broadcasting system fulfilled several important functions traditionally associated with the PSB concept in Western Europe. The geographic universal coverage and financial accessibility of services, as well as contributions to national identity, language and culture, are perceived as characteristic features of PSB (Raboy, 1999; McQuail, 2000). These are easily identified in the practices of the dually controlled Soviet TV. The crucial difference was a propagandistic and manipulative role assigned to Soviet broadcasting by the political elite, e.g. the Communist party and *nomenklatura*. Yet even here, one finds the legitimating reasons for PSB and state TV seem rather close. As Sparks puts it, "the starting point for public service broadcasting is the need of programming, rather than the need of profitability" (Sparks, 1998: 157). But in the Soviet Union 'the programming need' of Soviet broadcasting was to act as a "means to realise the process of dissemination of ideas, theories, socially significant information and education of social sentiments, habit, motivations, intentions, etc" (Politizdat, 1984: 31). In other words, both approaches strongly focus on content and its value, albeit for different intentions.

Together with the basic functions of the Soviet media as collective propagandist, agitator and organiser, the concept of *democratic centralism* was used to safeguard the concentration of political and ideological power in the hands of the Communist Party and the submission of minorities to the majority. In this light, the idea of serving minorities, which is implied in the philosophy of PSB as one of its basic pillars, clearly opposed practices of Soviet broadcasting. On the other hand, internal cohesion of society as part of its missionary task was within the scope of Western European PSB discourse. The evidence indicates that the Soviet concept of broadcasting was within the same rational and socioeconomic continuum as the concept of PSB itself, although the Soviet case represented the extreme end of this continuum when assessing the intensity of ideological pressures and its dependency upon the *nomenklatura* (Brants, 1999: 232).

In practice, this all resulted in the high centralisation of Soviet broadcasting with programming policies that were completely subordinated to needs of the ruling political elite. As Paasilinna bluntly wrote, “there was a Party television in the Soviet Union. Everything else in television broadcasting was secondary to this purpose” (Paasilinna, 1995: 130). Although heavy ideological dependence of Soviet TV on the political strategy of the Communist Party remained self-evident, the idea of serving the society (or at least the proletariat, the dominant class of the society, headed by the Communist Party) was quite explicit in the concept of national broadcasting. Therefore in the course of Gorbachev’s ‘top-down revolution’, the *perestroika* economic course and *glasnost* media policy became a specific Soviet instrumentality to impose reformist social and economic innovations from the top of the power hierarchy on the society.

In the new historical circumstances, broadcasting was perceived as a key social institute to carry into practice the democratic intentions of the reformist Party leaders. Shortcomings of this policy became evident quickly: the lack of legal guarantees made broadcasting extremely vulnerable to political pressures, and consistency of broadcasting reforms was interrupted by numerous attempts of power elites to obtain immediate political advantages by instrumentally using TV but neglecting public interests. Recent Russian political history provides numerous cases of such attempts. But the idea of applying broadcasting as a tool or instrument to shape social values and improve social process is again very similar to Western PSB ideals.

In 1992, *Ostankino*, the reformed state owned national TV company, acted within traditions of public service television free from direct state censorship. This was symbolised and realised by the Ostankino company Director General, Yegor Yakovlev, one of the most popular journalists and the editor-in-chief, who successfully managed the *Moscow News* weekly in the new market conditions. Russian scholars pointed out that Yakovlev and his colleagues were well known due to their democratic views, professionalism and respect for the PSB concept as implemented in the BBC model.

Yakovlev was personally capable of transforming Ostankino into a truly public service company according to BBC principles (Tzvik and Kachkayeva, 1999: 276), but his independent position irritated President Yeltsin and the governing elite. He was unexpectedly dismissed and this signified the end of a short-lived period of editorial independence and efforts to apply the concept of PSB on the First national TV channel. The pressures were not only exerted by the political elite, however. The emerging commercial advertising lobby pushed for the restructuring of the Ostankino ownership to grab a substantial piece of former state property for their business interests, thus multiplying the opposition to the public service model in the Russian TV industry.

In 1992–1994 the Russian parliament tried to work out a law on broadcasting with a twofold aim: 1) to legitimise a dual TV system in Russia characterised by the coexistence of state and private TV companies already operating in the market, and 2) to introduce a more responsible and account-

able television model. The draft law envisaged certain public service elements: state TV companies funded by the Government were to be supervised by a nine member supervising board appointed by the two chambers of the Parliament and the President. That was proposed to safeguard Russian public broadcasting controlled by different political representatives and accountable to several competing centres of political power. The law has not been adopted. The idea of supervising councils fell on deaf ears and did not gain support from the Government or in the Russian parliament, the *Duma*. The dual – state and private – broadcasting system has instead been consolidated under the control of a new integrated financial–political elite, the oligarchs, thus resulting in the creation of a state-private TV system accountable only to media-political corporate capital (Zassoursky I., 2001: 80).

Still, the idea of PSB was supported by groups of civic activists and academics. They tried to promote the accountability of the state-funded companies to the public. But their efforts sadly failed and the way was open for various models of combining government and corporate control over broadcasting in Russia. The political legacy of Soviet state broadcasting survived in terms of the relations between government, power elites and broadcasting institutions and this is evident through the whole period of social and economic change in 1991–2001. In this case, both excessive political control and excessive commercial control signalled dangers and weaknesses in the growing new system of Russian broadcasting.

The oligarchic model of ‘public’ ORT

The First channel of the former Gosteleradio went through a long period of partial privatisation and structural reorganisation. It was separated from the formerly unified broadcasting monopoly in the early 1990s and renamed. The Ostankino company was later privatised and converted into a national share holding TV company by presidential decree on November, 30, 1994. This was the genesis of ORT, ‘*Public Russian Television*’ (Obshestvennoye Rossiskoye Televideniye). However, it did not actually anticipate any elements of public service as construed in Western Europe. There was nothing about such principles as accountability to the public or regulation of content in, for example, banning certain kinds of advertising, violence, and pornography (Siune & Hulten, 1998: 25). Instead, ‘*Public Russian Television*’ was gradually moving towards increased accountability to top politicians and powerful financial and industrial pressure groups, dependence on commercial advertising and reliance upon low taste and low quality programming.

Contrary to the recognised role of public and/or state ownership in protecting public service broadcasting from commercial pressures, the ORT corporate structure thus represented a strange symbiosis of new oligarchic capital with inflexible and technologically outdated state television property. Although in formal terms the majority of ORT shares were owned by several

state agencies (51% of all shares), the role of private banks, insurance and industrial companies (49% of shares) remained truly decisive in establishing managerial schemes appropriate to media-political capital interests. The control over top management established by Boris Berezovsky, one of the ORT private shareholders and a politician who secured his political carrier through his media companies, made him the true boss of 'public' Russian TV.

In these circumstances ORT became a mouthpiece for a select group of Yeltsin's allies to transmit their views to the nation. Berezovsky and the Kremlin administration, to which he had strong informal ties, enormously benefited from ORT institutional and managerial ambiguity. In 1996, during Yeltsin's re-election campaign, ORT acquired a reputation as 'the presidential channel' because of its apologetic support for Yeltsin. In turn, Berezovsky successfully translated the virtual capital he gained through ORT privatisation into political power to influence public opinion in Russia. With 36% of the shares under his personal control, combined with the weak state unable to manage and finance the ORT channel that was available to 98% of Russians, Berezovsky "headed the main Russian TV channel and explained to Russians what happened in the country" (Khlebnikov, 2001: 167).

The inclusion of 'public' in the defining name of the company could no longer camouflage the existence of this media-political system. It was only used to roughly mask mixed state-corporate exploitation of ORT with the dual goal of promoting the influence of the political elite by establishing tough controls over public opinion during election campaigns and garnering commercial profits through uncontrolled transmission of advertising. The channel was and still is financed mostly by advertising and remains under the total control of its executives appointed by the state.

The democratic model of RTR

At the start of the democratisation process in Russia, the democratic model was promoted by journalists of the Russian broadcasting company (RTR), created in the Russian Federation but in the frame of the Soviet media system in 1990. For its operations, RTR obtained Channel Two of the former Gosteleradio, which was separated from the Central Ostankino television company. The idea of competition, in contrast to the 'old' Soviet TV monopoly, was integrated in the concept of new Russian TV. Political confrontation between Gorbachev and Yeltsin resulted in the first real step towards destroying the monolith of state-owned TV, although the state duopoly that emerged in the early 1990s still had a very long way to go to acquire a clearly competitive structure (Vartanova, 2001: 45).

Similar to the attempts of Yegor Yakovlev to renovate ORT in 1992, RTR's drive for democratic values have been associated with Oleg Poptsov who was the head of the state broadcasting company run by All-Russian State Television and Radio Company [VGTRK] in 1991–1996. McNair described

Poptsov's activity as a personal attempt to preserve the public (as opposed to commercial) sector as the only strategy for introducing BBC-style PSB into the practices of Russian TV:

[RTR] regularly received only 30 percent or so of its agreed annual state subsidy, and became dependent on advertising and sponsorship. In the face of this slow starvation (and *de facto* privatization) RTR, and its head Oleg Poptsov in particular, ran a principle campaign to retain public sector status, on the grounds that Russia needed at least one publicly owned TV channel, free of advertising if possible, and dedicated to the pursuit of the public service goals in programming (McNair, 2000: 89).

Poptsov's approach to state TV in the service of Russian society was based on his professional experience as a democratically-minded journalist with a strong belief that pluralism in news coverage, professionalism in bridging the gap between political rhetoric and reality, and criticism of government policies, might guarantee the state TV partial fulfilment of public service obligations. Until the Presidential elections in 1996 he managed to maintain a fairly high degree of autonomy in defining RTR programming policy, thus reflecting his respect for PSB values and journalistic norms in a democratic society. So this was an attempt to create a democratic model for the new state television premised on the principles of serving the public first and foremost.

It is however remarkable that even within the current mixed TV landscape the state remains the key player in the Russian TV market. In fact, the TV industry is the only segment of the Russian media where the state maintains the controlling position. Fully 50% of programming is provided by state-controlled TV channels. They also receive 70% of all TV advertising. This strange symbiosis of state ownership and commercial models of financing in the TV sector might be explained by its under-financing, but this is also crucial for the competition between state and private channels, especially in regions.

In terms of national coverage, RTR is the second biggest channel with a generalist programming scheme. However, it is clear that nowadays news and current affair programmes at RTR are used by the state to provide Russians with information that is favourable to the government and the President. Again the television started to be used for the propaganda and public relations of the state. At the same time, it has become fairly open to commercial interests since the bulk of its revenues came from advertising.

The state controlled model of NTV

Vladimir Gusinskiy, the owner of the Most-bank, went into to the media business. In 1994 he consolidated his property into the Most Media corpora-

tion which started a broadcasting company, NTV. The company positioned itself as an independent broadcasting outlet and rapidly gained recognition with the public. Its independence dramatically accentuated the servile position of state controlled TV channels in mid-1990s. But then NTV used its popularity in co-operation with its competitor, Berezovsky dominated ORT, to push Yeltsin to victory in his campaign for reelection in 1996. As a kick back NTV got the license for broadcasting, previously used by the Russian educational channel. Most Media also paid for the launch (by a USA provider) of a broadcasting satellite which allowed Gusinsky to start a satellite TV company, NTV+.

However Gusinsky differed with President Yeltsin's policies on the war in Chechnya, and this independent stand taken by NTV irritated the President's administration. Gusinsky's company could not pay for its numerous media projects and had to seek loans. These came from the state monopoly, *Gazprom*. At the peak of the conflict Gusinsky was accused of mishandling the Gazprom loan and for a time was even put into the Butyrki prison.

Gazprom Media [GM] went to the courts to recover the loan from Most Media. The legal decision authorised GM to become a major shareholder in NTV. The ensuing battle for the control of the popular channel led to public protests, but anyway ended in the Gazprom Media take-over. The most militant group of journalists, headed by the editor in chief Yevgenie Kiselev, left the channel and went to TV-6, owned by Berezovsky who accommodated their continued broadcasting activities. This led to drastic changes on the TV-6 channel that started a new concept of broadcasting based on the principles of NTV. For several months in 2001-2002 TV-6 and the Gazprom-owned NTV were simultaneously on the air competing for the audience.

Under Gazprom Media control, NTV changed its previous independent position and in practice became state controlled through the mother-company – the state monopoly Gazprom. As a result, four out of five national Russian TV channels were state-controlled. The new NTV-Gazprom company became a new model for tying television to the state and government. The change in NTV editorial policies was evident, although it retained most of its previous programmes for which it had the copyright. Moreover, in competition with successful TV-6 it was reduced to a clone trying to win back its former audience – the audience lost due to popular dissatisfaction with the Gazprom take-over of NTV. Thus the privately owned NTV, which came close to the PBS model in its independent programming policies, was taken back to the Government-corporate controlled model (very close to that of the ORT) and, in reality, quite the opposite of the PSB model.

The TVS private model of quasi-public television

The success of TV-6 disturbed its state-controlled opponents and they used legal pretexts based on unclear aspects in the transfer of the former NTV

team (headed by Kiselev) to oust them from the TV-6 channel. They succeeded in getting an injunction against TV-6 and, by a court decision, their program was switched off the air in the middle of the night program. Kiselev's team had to find a new sponsor. After long negotiations a new company, 'Socium', was formed. It included most oligarchs who agreed to let Kiselev act free from their direct pressure to create a kind of public broadcasting service sponsored by the money of the very rich. Embattled by attempts to serve the public in privately owned TV, Kiselev argued for an option to develop PSB type channel under the auspices of a consortium of wealthy people and prominent politicians. For this purpose he developed a new structure of funding, management and programming in the new replacement service, TVS, which was *carefully* arranged with checks and balances to exclude pressure from financial, commercial, governmental and political parties in order to promote objective journalism on the pattern of public service broadcasting.

The private share holding company of Scoium, *Shestoi kanal*, is owned by a group of so-called 'natural resources oligarchs' controlling major oil, electric energy, aluminium and other industrial and financial companies, which comprise the basis of the Russian economy. The Directors of the Company include major figures in Russian business – A. Chubais, R. Abramovich, O. Deripaska, the Chairman of the Russian Chamber of Commerce, Y. Primakov (the former Prime Minister of Russia), and the President of the Society of Industrialists, A. Volskiy. The broadcasting license for TVS (Channel 6) belongs to a non-commercial partnership, "Media-socium" which is to serve as an intermediary between the owners and the journalists. The later is headed and directed by the editor in chief, Kiselev, whose rights and obligations are set in a special treaty between the journalists and the Media-socium, which thus serves as a link between the journalists and the owners of the channel.

Kiselev had to rename his broadcasting company, changing the name from TV6 to TVS. It resumed broadcasting under the new abbreviation. It was indeed an attempt to create quasi-public television funded by big business corporations which united to create an independent (or at least free from state agencies' pressures) national TV channel in the face of almost unchallenged state domination in the national television market.

The nine-member Board of Guardians was established to promote editorial independence from any pressure on the part of the state, management and other interested parties, and thus to counter any attempts to establish direct or indirect censorship or submit broadcasting to the interests of political or financial groups. This move stresses the public service profile of the channel. The Board is comprised of prominent Russian public figures and experts in broadcasting with respect for high ethical standards. The Board is comprised of three candidates from the non-profit partnership Media-socium, three candidates from the shareholders of the share holding company "The Sixth Channel", and three candidates representing the public. The Board of

Guardians is an important mechanism for transparency of the channel, and also an important link with the public.

The substitution of the public interest by the state interest promotes etatism in the media sphere (Zassoursky, 2001: 188) and TVS seems to be challenging the etatisation onslaught on the Russian television market. The non-profit partnership Media-socium is financially independent of the State and the Government, the funding comes from private sources of the corporations which voluntarily accepted the obligation to respect the independent character of the content of the broadcasting, the independence of editorial policies. In this case, the Board of Guardians is to safeguard the public interest against the pressures of both the state and the corporations. This concept of broadcasting is different from the traditional West European PSB vision via basing its public character on an alternative consensus of journalists, capital and the public – although the State retains its regulating function through the legal system.

In traditional PSB the state transfers its rights to public control via various forms of independent watchdog councils. In the non-profit partnership, Media-socium, the corporate forces behind it try to transfer their rights to the journalists through the Council of Guardians. Only future practices will prove the sustainability of this concept of serving the public that has already confronted certain difficulties from the advertising monopolists. And there other substantial differences compared with traditional PSB – Media-socium is best in its news service, but not strong at all in programming for children and for education. It also relies for revenue on advertising and entertainment and is targeted to the emerging Russian middle class.

Mixed TV system: The future of Russian PSB in a commercial TV landscape

By 2000, the number of state-owned and state-controlled TV companies remained the same but there appeared a multitude of commercial privately owned television stations which now outnumber the state owned TV companies more than ten times. According to the Russian Ministry of Press and Broadcasting, the authorities have issued 1,276 broadcast licenses in 2002 for TV broadcasting and 1,002 for radio broadcasting (Proekt doklada, 2002). The core of the Russian TV market is comprised of 9 channels available to more than 50 per cent of the population. They are:

- Three all-national federal channels though of different ownership: *ORT* with a mixed structure of state and private shareholders, the state *RTR*, and the private *NTV* owned by the state-controlled natural resources company Gazprom,

- Four federal TV networks: *TVS*, *Ren-TV*, *CTC*, *TNT*,
- Two regional channels with national distribution: state-owned and financed *Kultura* (Culture) and the Moscow municipal *TVC* (TV Centre).

The federal government maintains strong relations with the majority of nationally distributed state (formally) and private (informally) TV channels. This has put state-controlled TV in a very competitive and market-driven environment and the profit-making motivations are becoming essential for the bulk of TV companies regardless their ownership status. Expansion of the new commercial TV logic gradually erodes the basis for the still embryonic PSB in Russia, and its potentials.

Thus, future prospects for public service broadcasting in Russia remain rather vague. Increasing competition in the media field provides Russians with increased media choice and alternatives. A vigorous newspaper market offers new quality dailies in the sector of business press or weeklies. Quality entertainment is supplied by commercial TV channels and the video market, and by format radio stations. Educational and political analysis content is available through the *Runet*, the Russian language sector of the Internet which invented a number of on-line newspapers and news portals truly competitive with offline media. So, consequently, one must ask if there is currently space for PSB in Russia?

Financial schemes

The reason the widely debated and publicly supported concept of PSB has failed to be implemented in Russian circumstances is mainly economic, since even the state-owned RTR and state-controlled ORT do not get sufficient state funding. They must heavily depend on advertising as a result of the lack of political will on the part of the government to support broadcasting as a public service institution.

The lack of financial resources is a fundamental obstacle preventing the development of the Russian media. The introduction of a license fee as a source of funding for public service broadcasting seems really unworkable in Russian circumstances for several reasons. The low living standards of the bulk of the population make it impossible even to put this idea to public debate. In addition, in the planned Soviet economy the state fully financed the broadcasting sector, thus establishing the tradition of 'free' access to TV and radio. These economic conditions are clearly a big part of the problem. One of the main causes of the problematic situation is a lack of positive regulation favouring the interests of developing civil society in Russia. As a result we see a political and industrial failure to support even the concept of PSB. On the contrary, the post-Soviet Russian combination of politics and industry, i.e. the state and commerce, has contributed to the oligarchy with egoistic commercial interests and a deplorable neglect of the public interest.

On the other hand, it is evident that the dependence on advertising leaves broadcasting open and particularly vulnerable to commercial interests because, generally speaking, advertising is considered to be a very risky source of financing for PSB (Curran & Seaton, 1997: 113-115). From this point of view, the economy of Russian broadcasting is extremely complicated, reminding one of 'the vicious circle'. Poor, undeveloped or ineffectively managed advertising markets do not produce enough profits to sustain broadcasting development, thus forcing private channels to seek financial support and extra benefits from state authorities. In turn, looking for additional sources, under-financed state channels progressively introduce more advertising, thereby increasing commercial pressures from the corporate forces. In terms of the programming outcome, this ambiguity creates a new form of openness described by the second author as 'permissiveness' with little regard for humanistic values or requirements of morality, and simultaneously creates a barrier to public access to knowledge about what is going on in society (Zassoursky Y., 2000: 25).

The contradictions and complexity of the Russian media situation are revealed in the advertising industry, as well. The commercial advertising sector remains extremely sensitive to even minor changes in the still unstable Russian economy. In contrast, the Russian market in political advertising has been demonstrating a constant growth and a relatively good financial performance. As a result, Russian broadcasting, to a greater degree than many other media industries, remains connected to the market of political advertising (Raskin, 2001). This trend becomes especially evident before and during election campaigns, signalling a serious deviation from media economics in market democracies.

Consequently it can be concluded that in recent years the only profitable and reliable source of revenue for the Russian media has been political advertising. In pursuit of economic profit Russian media are selling audience access to politicians and political elites instead of commodity and consumer service advertisers. Seeking revenue within markets in depression, media become increasingly dependent on politics and, as a result, reflective media diversity substantially decreases (Vartanova, 2000: 114).

Kultura: A single alternative?

But the picture of Russian broadcasting would be incomplete without consideration of the positive experience of state owned TV. Indeed, at least one such television channel has come quite close to the concept of public service in its practical activities. This is the *Kultura* (Culture) TV channel. As in RTR, it is operated by VGTRK, which plays a crucial role in producing and broadcasting cultural programs. *Kultura* has no political news or current affair programmes, but its depolitisised nature is one of its compelling advantages.

In terms of funding, Kultura is completely dependent on direct state funding which it gets through VGTRK. On the other hand, the channel obviously benefits from being free from commercial pressures. Established in 1997, Kultura was well accepted by Russians as a source of high culture, quality feature films and children programmes. Despite the limited share of viewers (not more than 5% of the national audience), the channel provides Russians with the shared space to promote national culture and new post-Soviet identity, and to preserve worthy traditions of the Russian and Soviet audiovisual cultures. In some respects, then, Kultura perfectly fits into the framework of PSB general shifts from political to cultural motives, putting new emphasis on aims of preserving national culture and identity (Bardoel, Brants & Plug, 2000: 96).

A new and unique combination of Russian quality culture programming and a European approach to TV news was created in March 2002, when Kultura began to broadcast Euronews programmes in the morning hours. The co-operation has been based on the VGTRK partial ownership of *Euronews* shares and its new strategy of integration into the European PSB landscape. By opening up new perspectives to TV diversity, Kultura shows a unique form of state financed television with modern interpretations of PSB obligations.

Conclusions: Developing civil society in Russia

Ten years of transition to a market economy and democracy have not produced truly independent public television in Russia. This poses a number of questions about the ways of creating a television model accountable to the public rather than to new political or financial elites. In 1993, President Yeltsin issued a decree "On the guarantees of the information stability and requirements of broadcasting" in which he proclaimed the need to create "a competitive system of state, public and private broadcasting" and introduced "the minimal standard of requirements of broadcasting". But the notion of public interest, so crucial to the concept of public service was ignored in this document and consequently in the activity of Russian broadcasting companies. As a result, the discussion on public service broadcasting has been recently resurrected by some sections of the television community that are dissatisfied with the instrumental and subservient use of television by certain state and private institutions and interests.

This has reflected growing tensions between the audience and the national TV channels. State-controlled channels are openly criticised for increasing etatism, while commercial TV is repeatedly accused of using the concept of 'the public' to mask their actual private aims. Even when some private television companies at national (NTV, TVS) and local levels try to become more public interest oriented, their attempts meet enormous economic and political difficulties. Actually, Russian TV channels move towards

programming schemes based on entertainment at the expense of news, current affairs and educational programs. Openness to political and commercial interests does not automatically lead to an increase in national educational and cultural programming. So far, politicisation and entertainisation have become the major trends in the development of Russian TV, and both stand far from the concept of public service broadcasting.

PSB, non-existent and unknown in the Soviet Union, has not attracted much attention within the Russian public for several reasons, but foremost because of the lack of two basic conditions for it. These are political will and public need. The lack of a balanced and diverse political system, and consequently a recognised need for the 'democratic public forum' indispensable in civil society, has postponed public debates on the relevance of PSB for years. The neglect of PSB by the major 'player' in the TV sector – the Russian media-political elite – actually withdrew the concepts of TV responsibility and accountability from Russian public discourse. In these circumstances it took almost a decade for Russian society to realise that national TV should be more than simply a tool or instrument in the hands of politicians or oligarchs striving for political dominance.

Growing awareness about the role of broadcasting in cultural and public life has definite roots in the Soviet concept of state television that, in addition to political goals, put a clear emphasis on culture, education and enlightenment. The specifically Soviet practice of 'insular TV' described the medium as a form of contemporary art that had particular aesthetic and cultural values. The existence of the 4th national channel that broadcast only educational programs for schoolchildren and instructive programs for adults remained an exceptional practice even for public service broadcasting. Therefore, the old Soviet TV had fulfilled at least some public service obligations (maintaining cultural identity, quality documentaries, educational programs) which were lost in early post-Soviet years. This tradition was maintained in present circumstances in a very limited scope via activities of the Kultura channel.

Balanced between understanding PSB relevance and opposition to the idea of publicly financed television, Russians are left to decide what type of TV they need. The political will of the State – the Government, the Duma, the local authorities – is required to create at least the legal framework for developing independent public service television accountable to the citizens of Russia. *Thus, public service broadcasting is both a part of and a condition for developing civil society in Russia.*

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Of Markets and Supply

Public Broadcasting in Germany

Christina Holtz-Bacha

Germany is one of the countries in Western Europe where public broadcasting had a monopoly for a long time before private channels appeared on the scene during the 1980s. The dual market with public broadcasting on the one side and private broadcasting on the other has created a fierce competition, bringing the public system and channels under considerable pressure. What at first glance appears to be a competition for ratings, and thus an economic question above all, has more crucially become a political discussion about the role of public broadcasting in general and its place in society.

This chapter analyzes the public broadcasting situation in Germany. Treatment first describes the legal background which, compared to other West European countries, is specific because the German Federal Constitutional Court has assigned public broadcasting a special role in the broadcasting market. Afterwards the author presents data demonstrating how public and private channels fare in the advertising and audience markets. Because a crucial question now hinges on whether private and public programs are comparatively distinct or not, findings from content analyses will be presented in the third step. Finally discussion focuses on what these developments mean for the position and the future of public broadcasting in Germany.

The chapter will show that, due to several rulings of the Federal Constitutional Court, public service broadcasting in Germany has been confirmed not only as an idea but also in its institutional arrangements. This link makes the German case different from other countries. The internal organization of the public corporations here is conceived to provide for a high standard of pluralism and has thus become part and parcel of the guarantee for the further existence of public service broadcasting in Germany.

The broadcasting market and its legal background

A cursory examination seems to indicate that Germany's public service broadcasters are in a comfortable and secure position. During the 1980s, the Fed-

eral Constitutional Court, which has always played an important role in defining broadcasting policy in Germany, developed a specific model for the emerging dual broadcasting market. The model's most important feature is the co-existence of public and commercial broadcasting in a system of communicating vessels. In this system, public service broadcasting was assigned the task of *basic supply* (*Grundversorgung*).

Basic supply, although only defined gradually, refers mainly to programming but also includes technical and financial prerogatives (c.f., Bethge, 1996). Basic supply was conceived as a comprehensive and varied selection of all formats and content. From the beginning, the Constitutional Court made it clear that basic supply does not at all mean 'minimum supply', but instead encompasses the classical public broadcasting mandate to offer information, education and entertainment. Moreover, basic supply also includes programming for minority groups. In the mid-1980s, when the Constitutional Court designed this specific model for the dual broadcasting system, almost all households could receive the public service channels, whereas the private channels could only be received by some parts of the population. This was another reason for making the public broadcasters responsible for basic supply.

It's important to understand that basic supply does not mean a division of labor with public service channels restricted to cultural and public-interest programming, which would marginalize them, while commercial broadcasters offer mass appeal fare. The basic supply mandate was assigned to the public service networks *ARD* and *ZDF* because they have a guaranteed income through the public broadcasting fee that must be paid by everyone who owns a radio and/or TV set. The fee is exclusively for funding the public service channels. Thus, their (near) independence from advertising revenues should theoretically relieve public broadcasters from having to base programming decisions on a program's ratings. The public channels are therefore regarded as essentially independent of the advertising industry.

High demands for diversity go hand in hand with the notion of basic supply. In addition, the internal structures of the public service broadcasting system, particularly the Broadcasting Council, in which the so-called relevant social groups are represented, seemed to be the best guarantor of this proscribed diversity. Thus, the Constitutional Court ruled that as long as the public channels guarantee a high degree of diversity, such requirements could be lowered (though not completely abandoned) for commercial channels. As a consequence, it is in the interest of the commercial channels that public service broadcasting remain capable of fulfilling its mandate because otherwise they would have to compensate for any deficiency should the public channels no longer be able to deliver the basic supply. Were the commercial channels required to cater to all interests they would obviously lose their freedom and independence in programming decisions which are guided mainly by the profit motive. Having to ensure comprehensive and diverse programming would therefore run counter to their ratings orientation.

But in order to play the role assigned in the mandate, public service broadcasting requires guarantees for its existence and further development (*Bestands- und Entwicklungsgarantie*), in particular this means adequate financial provisions. The existence of public service broadcasting and its share in future technological developments was confirmed in the Interstate Broadcasting Treaty, negotiated on the basis of the specific model for the dual broadcasting market outlined by the Constitutional Court in its 1986 ruling and another ruling in 1987. This Broadcasting Treaty (*Rundfunkstaatsvertrag*), concluded for the first time in 1987, was signed by the (then) 11 German *Länder* (federal states, now totaling 16 since German unification in 1990), which have legislative competence for broadcasting.

However, the existence guarantee for public service broadcasting is only meant to be a guarantee of the public service model, not necessarily a guarantee for the current structure. The structure consists of two institutions. ARD is an association of 9 regional broadcasting corporations (and the foreign broadcasting service *Deutsche Welle*), and the centralized ZDF. In addition to running radio channels in each state, the ARD operates a national TV service through its 10 broadcasting corporations. They also offer 8 more regionally oriented, but nevertheless generalist, programs. ARD and ZDF cooperate in *3SAT*, a satellite channel produced in cooperation with the Swiss *SRG* and the Austrian *ORF*, and in *Arte*, a French-German joint enterprise. Together, ARD and ZDF also started the *Kinderkanal* (children's channel) and *Phoenix*, which is mainly a documentary channel. Thus, the existence guarantee is a safeguard of the public service idea which includes the organizational model based on internal pluralism but it does not guarantee the further existence of the two networks and the multitude of channels they run.

The position of the public service channels on the advertising and audience markets

The German broadcasting market today is extremely competitive. This is due to the size of the population and the potential of the advertising market. Germany's current total population is 82 million (38 million households). The actual TV market is even larger because of two neighboring German-speaking countries, Austria and the German-speaking part of Switzerland. Total advertising revenue on the media market in 2000 was 18,166 million Euro, with 43.9% going to television and 5.7% to radio (all figures: IP, 2001).

Today, in addition to the traditional terrestrial distribution of television, a majority of German households can be reached either via cable or satellite. At present, about 54% of the more than 33 million TV households have cable. Another 38% have a private satellite dish or access to an SMATV system. All TV households receive terrestrial television (IP, 2001). The average TV household, independent of technical equipment, receives 36 channels

(Darschin & Gerhard, 2002: 154). The public broadcasters' overall share of the adult audience (14 years+) is 44.1%. The commercial sector has been dominated by the Kirch Group at 24% and the RTL Group at 23%. Each group operates four channels (IP, 2001). Recently, however, the Kirch Group went bankrupt and is in the process of being sold at the time of this writing. It's as yet unclear what the impact will be.

Audience fragmentation is characteristic of the German TV market. This is due to the high number of channels competing on the market and the fact that the programming volume is growing more rapidly than individual TV viewing time. Individual channels achieve comparatively low overall audience shares. The most popular channel, which in 2000 was the public station ARD, only has a share of about 15%.

The dominant share of revenue from TV advertising goes to the commercial broadcasting sector. Advertising on public channels is restricted to a maximum of 20 minutes per weekday, and can only be aired before 8 pm. Advertising regulations for commercial channels in Germany correspond to the limits set by the EC Directive *Television Without Frontiers*, allowing for a maximum of 12 minutes of advertising per hour throughout the day. As a result, advertising revenues at public TV channels today only account for about 17% of their overall income. Although a small percentage of their total revenue is derived from other sources, the broadcasting fee accounts for more than 75% of the income of both public networks. Since the introduction of commercial broadcasting, the percentage of the public channels' income from advertising diminished to about one-half or even less of what ARD and ZDF once had.

Because the public channels have reached their advertising limits and are not allowed to extend the time devoted to advertising, any rise in the amount of overall expenditure for TV advertising goes to the commercial channels. Between 1993 and 2000 absolute spending on TV advertising in Germany has more than doubled (1993: €3,736 million; 2000: €7,978) and the share of advertising that goes to television has risen by more than 10% (1993: 33.9%, 2001: 44.4%). However, for the first time in 2001 advertising income decreased (Engländer, 2001; 2002) for all media (TV 2001: €7,566 million).

The audience's images of public and commercial TV, and thus the functions of both systems for the viewers, are quite different. Overall, the public channels are regarded as being more objective, more believable, more competent, more ambitious, and more critical. The commercial channels are described as being more casual, more modern, more entertaining, more daring, and more versatile (Ridder & Engel, 2001: 115). Beyond these general images, public TV is assigned greater competence with regard to informational content, whereas commercial channels are regarded as better in catering to entertainment interests. When it comes to news and information shows, audiences accord 69% of their viewing time to the public channels. In contrast, 59% of the time spent with entertainment and fiction go to the commercial channels. The appeal of respective offerings indicate a clear relation to political interest. Viewers with an interest in politics show a stronger

attachment to public TV while viewers less interested in politics turn rather to the commercial channels (Darschin & Gerhard, 2002).

Convergence of content?

With the establishment of commercial television and its rapid success, it was expected that the offerings of public and commercial channels would become increasingly similar. This gave rise to the *convergence hypothesis*, whichever the direction of assimilation. But in general, there are still considerable differences between public and commercial channels when comparing overall programming. The public channels devote more time to news and current affairs programs, whereas the commercial channels concentrate on entertainment, particularly fiction programs (Krüger, 2001).

In terms of content structure, particular interest has been shown in the way politics is presented on public and commercial systems. Several studies (e.g., Bruns & Marcinkowski, 1997; Greger, 1998; Krüger, 1996, 2000; Wegener, 2001) compared the presentation of politics on public and commercial TV, some over time, in an attempt to assess the validity of the convergence hypothesis. Although the results were heterogeneous, the findings generally confirm differences in the way public and commercial television present politics. Commercial channels tend to present political matters to a greater extent as *infotainment*, packaging the political subjects in an entertaining manner.

However, findings also indicate a turn in German public television towards infotainment. A study by Krüger (1996), undertaken in the middle of the 1990s, analyzed the public affairs programming of two public and three commercial channels. With regard to the 'issue agenda' and the 'structure of the actors', both systems at that time presented clearly distinct content. Compared to the public channels, the commercial competitors concentrated more on issues from everyday life, events in the entertainment and media industry, as well as sensationalism which are the categories that were used as indicators for infotainment in this study. By condensing the issues in two categories, with politics/economy/culture on the one side and human interest issues on the other, a clear difference in the journalism at the commercial and the public channels was obvious (Krüger, 1996; 2001).

The same is true for the structure of actors. Political actors have a better chance of appearing on the public programs while private actors are seen more frequently on commercial programs (Krüger, 1996; cf. also Greger, 1998). Not surprisingly, there is also a contrast between systems in terms of the level of reference of the issues: Public channels prefer events and issues that affect society as a whole or refer to a particular level of reference, meaning institutions or problems with effects for particular groups of society. Commercial channels deal preferably with issues referring to the individual, private level.

Finally, the dramaturgical presentation of issues on public and commercial TV differs. Again, the emotional mood components appeared more often in the commercial than in the public programs (Krüger, 1996). In general, the programs on both systems were dominantly characterized by objectivity and matter-of-factness. However, where emotions could be detected, negative emotions like fear and sorrow were more frequently found than positive emotions like joy and compassion. These findings for the issues, the structure of actors and the dramaturgical presentation led the author to conclude that the commercial channels offer a more infotainment oriented program than the public channels.

Public service broadcasting under pressure

The position of public service broadcasting in Germany seems to be secure. Ideally, it could be pursuing its basic supply mandate free from market constraints. Nevertheless, the public channels have been drawn into competition with the commercial channels and this can be attributed to two reasons: the characteristics of the German broadcasting market and the delicate relationship between politicians and public service broadcasting. Both have forced the public channels to constantly try to legitimize their existence and financing through the broadcasting fee.

The convergence hypothesis, although allowing for bi-directional assimilation, has in practice brought up two questions: On the one hand, whether public service broadcasting still fulfills its task of providing the audience with a basic supply of programming if it adopts the logic of the commercial channels, and on the other whether commercial broadcasting might at some point also be able to deliver the basic supply. Thus, public service broadcasting today faces a vicious circle: If it does not provide what the ratings indicate people want to see, which is part of the idea of basic supply, it has difficulties proving the necessity of its existence and thus justifying that everyone must pay the broadcasting fee even if they do not use the public channels. But if it tries to attract mass audiences the difference between public and private broadcasting disappears, and the existence of public service broadcasting is also called into question. Public service broadcasting therefore has to balance on a tightrope walk between making offers for a broader public and catering for special interest and minority audiences. Since public service broadcasting has always been related to quality programming, even in its attempts to attract high ratings it is expected to distinguish itself from its commercial competitors.

By having a guaranteed income from the broadcasting fee and binding it to offer a comprehensive and diverse program and catering to minority audiences as well, the public service broadcasting could (and in part has to) act independently of audience ratings. However, for the public channels too, ratings become the decisive measure of success.

Even if public channels could act independent of ratings in their decisions concerning the contents, they still have to compete with commercial channels on the market for TV programs. With the rapid growth of the commercial broadcasting sector and the ensuing rise in the demand for content, the prices have increased as well. While the commercial channels can hope to compensate for high purchase prices with advertising, public channels have less leeway in purchase decisions. Sports, and particularly football, is the best example. The cost of acquiring the broadcast rights for German Football League matches, or the European and World Championships, have been driven to formerly unimaginable levels. The public channels – with their revenues being more or less fixed – do not have much financial latitude to compete on the market. If they give in to the competition and pay the going price, the necessary consequence would be cuts in the production budgets for other programs. On the other hand, if they leave the field to their commercial competitors, their capability to offer comprehensive programming is also called into question.

In order to gain more freedom for program decisions and to strengthen their position on the market, the public channels have repeatedly asked for a relaxation of advertising regulations. In particular, the advertising ban after 8 p.m. means no advertising during prime time when the highest ad prices can be obtained. Thus, even if the amount of advertising – a maximum of 20 minutes per day – remained the same, the income from advertising could be increased by allowing for advertising later in the evening. However, such demands by public channels have always stirred protests from commercial competitors who point at the public channels' guaranteed fee income. The politicians, who would have to change the respective broadcasting laws, have also almost unequivocally rejected the idea.

The public service broadcasting system in Germany was built immediately after the war by the occupying powers and based on the model of the BBC, was conceived to be independent of the state (c.f., Tracey, 1998). The public channels are corporations under public law. However, German politicians searched for, and quickly discovered, loopholes to gain a certain influence. The broadcasting corporations have a three-tiered structure. Their chief representative is the Director General. S/he is responsible for the functioning of the corporation and is supervised by an Administrative Council and a Broadcasting Council. Among the members of the Broadcasting Council, which controls the programming and also elects the Director General, are members of the state parliaments and governments. Since the groups who are allowed to elect members to the Broadcasting Councils are determined in the broadcasting laws, the selection of these groups is also in the hands of politicians and can thus be instrumentalized. Although in 1991 the Constitutional Court clarified that members of the Broadcasting Councils are to be representatives of the public in general and not representatives of particular group interests, the council members nevertheless have allegiances. They are commonly classified according to their "color": red and black for

the two big parties (Social Democrats, Christian Democrats), and gray for interest group representatives, even though they usually can also be assigned to one political side or the other.

Thus, by way of their legislative competence in broadcasting, politicians can influence the composition of the Broadcasting Council and, as members of the Council, can subsequently influence programming and personnel decisions. First and foremost, they can influence the appointment of the Director General and other leading posts. Broadcasting Councils exist within each corporation. Because the 9 regional corporations contribute to ARD's national/joint programming, the Councils' influence reaches beyond the individual corporation and can affect cooperation at ARD. In addition, there exist numerous other possibilities for direct personal intervention of politicians.

Of no less importance is the decision about the broadcasting fee. The fee amount is fixed by the state prime ministers and must be ratified by the state parliaments. Since all Germans are supposed to pay the same amount, all 16 states have to reach agreement. This is done in an Interstate Treaty on Broadcast Financing (*Rundfunkfinanzierungsstaatsvertrag*) effective for approximately three years. Several reasons make the negotiations about the broadcasting fee a delicate question.

The fee has to be paid by everybody who owns a TV set, even if they do not watch public television. This gives the fee the character of a tax, and any increases must be well justified. In addition, party politics also play a role. The state premiers represent not only one of the big parties but, more often than not, a coalition government. This means that decisions in the state parliament need the agreement of at least two parties to get a majority. Because the two big parties differ in their stance on broadcasting politics, with the Social Democrats being closer to public service broadcasting and the Christian Democrats somewhat more in favor of the commercial broadcasters, decisions on broadcasting policy always take the character of a difficult compromise. Both sides use the negotiations to advance other interests. This usually boils down to a bit of horse trading, with both sides expecting the other to make concessions on some other issue in exchange for their consent to a higher broadcast fee. For example, in the mid-1990s, when new media concentration rules were being discussed for the private broadcasting sector, the Christian Democrats made their agreement to the broadcasting fee contingent on the Social Democrats' accepting a low threshold for concentration rules that were switched to a model based on audience shares.

There is a special commission, the KEF (*Kommission zur Ermittlung des Finanzbedarfs der Rundfunkanstalten* = Commission for ascertaining the financial needs of the public service broadcasting corporations), which makes a recommendation on how to adjust the broadcasting fee. The Commission is composed of 16 experts (one from each state) who are supposed to be independent. They are, however, nominated by the premiers of each state. Based on financial needs calculated by the public corporations, the KEF examines whether program decisions are being made within the framework

of the public service broadcasting mandate and whether or not the corporations are managing their budgets economically. The Commission then submits a proposal to the state governments on how much the broadcasting fee should be increased.

A ruling by the Constitutional Court in 1994, dealing with the way the broadcasting fee is fixed, stressed that this decision can neither be left to the state nor to the broadcasting corporations themselves. However, the Court ruled that the calculation of the financial needs (and thus the proposal for the fee increase) is to be based on the programming decisions of the channels themselves. Freedom of broadcasting as guaranteed in the Constitution prohibits the legislators' decision on the broadcasting fee from being used as a means of program control or for the purposes of media policy. As a consequence, the practice of the KEF and the way the Commission deals with the financial requirements of the public corporations had to be regulated by a law.

With this decision the Court explicitly acknowledged the fact that the broadcasting fee can be an effective means for indirect influence on public service broadcasting, and its role in the dual broadcasting market in particular. Nevertheless, even though the procedure has been given a legal basis in the meantime, politicians still use their approval of broadcasting fee increases, and thus of the financial allocations to public service broadcasting, to advance their respective media policy interests. Recently, the system of equalization payments among the *ARD* corporations came up for discussion. Within this system, a certain percentage of money flows from financially stronger to weaker corporations, thus enabling all of them to contribute to the joint *ARD* TV program. If this system were abandoned, smaller corporations would be forced to make severe cuts in production, personnel and long-term cooperation programs. For some politicians, this offers an opportunity to punish certain corporations that have been a thorn in their side. Alternative models for deciding on the broadcasting fee increase that could provide for a more independent procedure, for example binding the fee to an index such as the cost-of-living index, have always been rejected.

Since the legislative competence for broadcasting matters generally lies with the 16 states, the same politicians who set the conditions for public service broadcasters, in particular their level of financing via the broadcasting fee and advertising restrictions, also make the rules for commercial broadcasters. This can place them in a difficult position when the interests of the two sides are in conflict. While being urged to shore up the legal framework that allows the public channels to fulfill the basic supply requirement, the politicians are also being pushed to create conditions to allow for the development of private broadcasting. In addition, the media sector is regarded as an industry with a bright future. As a result, state governments often court the (private) media owners to attract them and their channels to their own state. It is therefore in their interest to provide the most favorable conditions possible.

Conclusion: Doing the Splits

Public service broadcasting is expected to compete with commercial broadcasting. Even the Constitutional Court has repeatedly stressed that public service broadcasting must be able to compete on the market. However, with the basic supply requirement having been defined as providing comprehensive and diverse programming while also serving minority interests, public service broadcasting has been forced to do the “splits” (*Das Normziel Freiheit*, 1999: 7). It has been caught up in a “justification dilemma” (Eifert, 2000: 6): On the one hand, public broadcasters have to deliver basic programming because this is the justification for having a guaranteed income from the broadcasting fee. On the other hand, being financed by the broadcasting fee that has to be paid by everyone also requires a broad acceptance by the viewing audience, which creates a certain pressure to cater for the interests of the mass audience. Moreover, political actors need audience acceptance to legitimize their support of public broadcast financing by the fee.

As a result, public broadcasters are expected to compete by market rules but have not been given the “tools” to meet this expectation since they lack financing autonomy, the basis for market-oriented behavior. Programming decisions, the creation of new specialized channels like Kinderkanal or Phoenix, or activities in the online sector, are eyed closely by the private station operators and raise the question of whether such ventures comply with the mandate of basic supply.

To free public service broadcasting from this dilemma, two solutions are possible. Either public service broadcasting must be regarded as providing a meritorious good and, as such, removed from competition completely. This would require some effort to legitimize its role. Or public service broadcasting could be granted independence from politicians following their individual interests and, with regard to their concurrent regulatory competence for public and private broadcasting, conflicting interests. Public broadcasters could thus act freely on the market.

Public service broadcasting is here to stay if basic supply be regarded as a necessity because that is the only system to guarantee its steady delivery. Even if commercial channels were able to meet the basic supply requirement, there would be no guarantee they could do this permanently since they would likely give it up quickly if fulfillment endangered their widespread attractiveness, and thus threatened ratings and correlated advertising revenue.

The Constitutional Courts’ decision to assign basic supply to the public companies can be interpreted as an institutional guarantee. The high demands on diversity that go along with this mandate can only be met by an adequate organizational structure that comprises a pluralistic element as the public channels have in the form of the Broadcasting Council. This indeed secures the public broadcasting model as a combination of a certain idea and a certain organizational arrangement. However, it cannot be regarded as a guar-

antee for the current ARD/ZDF structure with better than one dozen channels. Particularly ARD, being an association of (presently) 10 regional corporations, is under financial pressure and thus the subject of discussion. In 1998, two formerly separate corporations in the Southwest of Germany were merged into one. Another merger for Berlin and Brandenburg has been put into effect in May 2003. Thus, the number of channels may be further reduced in the future, but the basic model of public service broadcasting seems unlikely to change for the near future.

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PUBLIC SERVICE PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES
STRATEGY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Public Service Broadcasting Is Not Dead Yet

Strategies in the 21st Century

Jeanette Steemers

Over the years a great deal has been written about the steady demise of public service broadcasting because of increasing competition from new commercial offerings via cable, satellite, digital transmission and, more recently, the Internet. Given growing opportunities to compile one's own entertainment menu from a smorgasbord of offerings, it is easy to conclude that the future outlook for broadcast television and public service television, in particular, is bleak. But I will take a contrary position, arguing that public service broadcast television as a specifically Western European phenomenon is very much 'alive and kicking'. Public service broadcasters have survived to date by reinventing themselves to meet the challenges of new technology, competition and regulatory change. These companies are past and present masters of justifying the grounds for their further existence.

But this reinvention has come at a price, often keyed to emulating commercial practices either through necessity, including political and/or financial pressures, or by choice (Steemers, 1999). Public service broadcasters have taken a 'pragmatic' approach, recognising that adherence to a 'purist', traditional ethos means marginalisation and the loss of public support in ratings and legitimacy for public funding (cf. Blumler, 1993: 403-4).

In the dual system of public and private television across Western Europe, no public service broadcaster is wholly isolated from the pressures of the marketplace – they must secure ratings with popular programmes and demonstrate economic efficiency. However true that ratings success underpins claims to public funding, there are problems in reconciling both the pressures and attractions of the marketplace with the more traditional principles of public service broadcasting. Those principles legitimate the case for 'special' funding in the form of the licence fee or other forms of public aid. So the contradictions hinge on the paradox that the competitive environment has encouraged some public service broadcasters to adopt a controversial range of expansionary and commercial strategies which, in turn, brings them

into conflict both with their traditional remit and with commercial competitors.

Using examples from Western Europe, this chapter considers the continued justification for publicly funded 'public service broadcasting' in an apparently converging multimedia environment. It then assesses how the public service remit is being recast to meet the challenges of a more competitive television market. Building on earlier work on the role of public service broadcasting and its justification in the digital age (Steemers, 1998, 1999, 2001), this chapter examines how different public broadcasters are responding to the challenges they face.¹

Why is such confidence in public service broadcasting merited? First the recent economic downturn that has shaken the commercial sector and resulted in declining advertising revenues has proven less problematic for those public broadcasters almost solely financed by the licence fee (e.g., BBC/UK, SVT/Sweden, DR/Denmark, NRK/Norway). Even if increases in the licence fee or other forms of public funding lag behind broadcasting inflation, the licence fee is at least sufficiently predictable to provide some insulation from the unpredictabilities of the market place.

The licence fee may not allow public service broadcasters to do everything they wish to participate in the digital revolution, but in most cases this income allows them to concentrate on programming rather than the pursuit of profits. The same cannot be said for those broadcasters with public service obligations that are also predominantly dependent on advertising income. For example, in November 2001 in the UK, David Liddiment, ITV's former director of programmes, was blaming its poor ratings performance on a reinvigorated BBC that had more licence money to spend and was, according to him, marginalising its commitment to news and current affairs (Liddiment, 2001).

Second, although channel proliferation has led to a fall in audiences for publicly funded broadcasters over the years, that has been mainly across services as audiences are redistributed. For the time being and in spite of the hype, broadband and interactive services have yet to catch the imagination of a broader public. In many countries, publicly funded broadcasters are still achieving respectable audience shares.² There are clearly limits to market segmentation in terms of both attractive content and the public's willingness and available time to spend on new services (Achille & Miège, 1994: 43). For big 'events', mainstream programming and major news stories, traditional 'generalist' broadcasters remain favoured sources. Even in digital television, one finds it has most often been larger public service broadcasters like the BBC or ARD and ZDF (Germany) in the forefront of providing new services which are publicly funded and therefore not subject to the vagaries of the commercial market place. So digital television, like analogue commercial television before it, has not signalled the death knell for public service broadcasters.

There remain future uncertainties about audience demand for PSB services, both old and new, and also about securing scarce content as the price of rights and talent rises, particularly in keen competitive areas like sport and fiction (Chalaby & Segell, 1999: 355-8). A further source of uncertainty stems from regulatory change at both national and EU levels that tends to favour a market-orientated approach. One also shouldn't neglect the unpredictable pace of technological change. But even if PSB is no longer the pre-eminent broadcasting service throughout Western Europe, it is by no means dead or dying. Public service broadcasters have learnt over the years how to deal with many competitive challenges, and in some cases it could be argued that competition has actually reinvigorated what were rather moribund monopolies.

What is the continued justification for public service broadcasting?

What constitutes the continued justification for publicly funded public service broadcasting in a largely multi-channel commercial environment? And if there is still justification for public provision, how far should it extend beyond traditional broadcasting activities into the realms of online distribution and multimedia content which appear so different from traditional broadcasting?

Historically PSB was justified on technical grounds (the lack of frequencies) and on the basis of an underlying philosophy grounded on normative values associated with western-style democracy, including especially diversity, pluralism, universal service, and the maintenance of cultural identity (Stemers, 2001: 73). It has been argued that these are still valid justifications for a public service role in the age of new technologies (cf. Barnett et al, 2000). In practice, PSB may not have always attained these ideals. For example, there have often been failings in public accountability, and also a susceptibility to party political or government interference, which raise doubts about the responsiveness of public broadcasters to public concerns (cf. Hibberd, 2001: 233-4; Humphreys, 1994: 176-87; Barnett & Curry, 1994: 19-20).

Since the 1980s the position of PSB has been weakened by arguments favouring market ideology and by increased competition in the marketplace. This has made it much harder to argue the case for public service broadcasting with the same degree of conviction and certainty. Public service broadcasting may still be performing respectably in terms of ratings, but the question of what it is for and how it should be defined is more loudly debated. For example, commercial competitors would prefer to see a more restricted definition of what constitutes public service broadcasting and resent what they perceive as the more 'commercial' and expansionary approach of some. They take such as an example of cross-subsidised and unfair competition

(cf. Steemers, 1999: 56-58). These concerns are reflected in the European Union's determination to ensure that public broadcasters do not infringe Community rules on state aid. So although Member States are free to define the public service remit and decide how PSB is funded (European Commission, 1997), the EU will use these definitions to assess whether public funding is always necessary for the fulfilment of the public service mission (European Commission, 2001).

Market failure is another key justification raised to support PSB's continuance. According to this argument, competition alone is no guarantee of audio-visual diversity because unregulated commercial broadcasting has tended to reduce the diversity, range and accessibility of television in order to appeal to the lowest common denominator (Graham, 2000: 93-99; Blumler, 1993: 405-6; Curran, 1991: 47). The argument suggests that under market conditions, audiences are targeted as consumers rather than citizens. This is construed as being detrimental to cultural communities and democratic society by reinforcing pre-existing inequalities based on factors such as age, education, geographical location, income and ethnic origin (Graham, 2000: 94; Murdock, 2000: 120-1; Hoffmann-Riem, 1996: 332).

Market failure is moreover compounded by commercial funding which tends to divert attention from programming and the needs of citizens to instead serve the financial priorities of others, especially advertisers, sponsors and shareholders (Steemers, 2001: 73). In this perspective, advertising-funded or sponsored programming prioritises 'mass' audiences or, at least, only those minority audiences that are financially attractive to advertisers. Meanwhile, subscription services restrict availability to those who can afford to pay. Proponents of PSB therefore premise its strength on purposes that are noticeably different from the profit-orientated objectives of the commercial sector. These purposes include high and independent editorial standards, investment in quality, support for democracy, and the dissemination of public information that contributes to the free marketplace of ideas and underpins democratic participation (Graham, 2000: 102-107; Hoffmann-Riem, 1996: 335).

These arguments about market failure are further extended to legitimate arguments for public service participation in online media. For example, freely available, broad-ranging and representative online public provision is said to function as a counterweight and trusted third party to the 'walled gardens' of vertically integrated conglomerates whose dominance in the marketplace is based on control of both content and distribution (cf. Shooshan and Cave, 2000). This view assumes that new media forms have the potential to become indispensable core services that merit public funding to help prevent the emergence of a two-tier society.

The belief that the market will ignore minority tastes or restrict access based on the ability to pay is not new, of course. In Germany such misgivings are reflected in a long series of Constitutional Court rulings since 1961 that clearly state that broadcast media can not be left to the free play of market forces

because of their vital contribution to informing and shaping public opinion (Steemers, 2001: 74). Indeed, German PSB's constitutional right to funding (mainly through the licence fee), continuance and further development is subject to meeting higher standards of programme diversity and plurality of opinion than its more loosely regulated commercial counterparts. For its part, the 'light touch' regulation of the commercial sector depends on PSB fulfilling its remit (Bundesverfassungsgericht, 1986: 19-20; also Steemers, 1999: 48-49). But even with intervention by the Courts as in Germany, those arguing for a more restricted definition dispute the definition of the 'public service remit'.

It is crucial to observe that the justification of PSB rests on values and objectives that are hard to quantify and also complicated by technical and programming developments that go beyond broadcasting into other areas, such as online content. In justifying their continuation, public broadcasters concentrate on the same 'higher' order obligations and values they have always emphasised (cf. Holznagel, 1999; ARD, 2000; BBC, 1999). Any cursory examination of broadcaster statements quickly reveals commitments to universal access, impartiality, culture, information, creativity, education and citizenship. With regard to meeting market failure, their responses typically suggest the importance of taking risks and of appealing to a range of different audiences without always having to worry about ratings or advertising revenue.

While the 'higher' order values and arguments about market failure go some way toward justifying PSB's continued survival in a mixed media economy from a theoretical point of view, they do not address the longstanding and increasing impact of commercial pressures on public service broadcasters. There is no such thing as a 'pure' public broadcaster and the commitment to societal objectives outlined above is compromised if there is over-reliance on commercial income or commercial objectives. For example, many public broadcasters rely on advertising income. Even a modest amount, as in mixed PSB systems (like Germany), can be seen to affect the diversity of content while also eroding the legitimacy of the licence fee (Peasey, 1990: 440-1). Similarly, pressures to raise co-production funding in the international marketplace or to increase revenues via programme sales and ancillary rights exploitation can affect choices about what type of programmes get made and for what audiences.

Of course, no public service broadcaster is immune to commercial pressures, but there are obviously varying degrees of commercialism and dependency on commercial income. When taken to the ultimate degree these tendencies can weaken the 'market failure' case for public service broadcasting and render public service broadcasters too comparatively similar to their commercial competitors.

In 1986 McQuail outlined various degrees of commercialism within public service broadcasting (p. 640). An adaptation of this model allows these

degrees of commercialism to be ordered in the following way (Steemers, 2001: 75-76):

1. A gradual popularisation of programming on PSB's core channels, especially in peak periods, in favour of mass audiences to justify licence fee support or maximise advertising revenues – and the removal of information and minority content to niche services or more marginal slots in the schedule.
2. PSB tries to become more cost-conscious and efficient in its activities and output by externalising services and adopting management practices from the commercial sector.
3. Additional services are offered on a subscription basis according to economic criteria, breaching the principle of universal access.
4. PSB becomes more dependent on commercial income – subscription, advertising, sponsorship, co-production finance, programme sales and merchandising revenues.
5. Parts or the whole of PSB are sold off – distribution networks, commercial subsidiaries, whole channels.

Many of these developments can already be observed in Western Europe, although the extent of their proliferation depends on different competitive, political, regulatory, and organisational contexts. Not all aspects of commercialism are necessarily incompatible with a public service remit. But even so it is crucial to observe that public service broadcasters wanting to keep (or tap) additional commercial funding, or who wish to alter programming services to maintain audience share, need to clearly show how this accords with their public service remit and continued public funding (Steemers, 2001: 76). Although empirical evidence seems to suggest that public service broadcasters continue to offer a greater range of content than their commercial counterparts (see McQuail, 1998: 121-124; also Krüger, 2001),³ the perception of blurring boundaries, promoted by the commercial sector, is eroding the case for PSB.

At the same time, discussions about the future role of public provision are hampered by an inability to look beyond existing public service broadcasting institutions to address complementary alternatives (Steemers, 1998: 106-107). Of course the dominance of the commercial model since the 1980s has made it difficult to consider alternative forms of public provision by alternative suppliers because it is nearly always assumed that the market can best satisfy public demand for new services. But restricting debate about future provision to existing public service institutions leaves little room for discussion of other options that might be better suited to meet changing public

needs in regional, local and minority provision (than large public service institutions) in both on-line and niche programming (Steemers, 1998: 107).

Broadcasters can and do suggest their preferred solutions, but there must also be a broader public consensus on what should be provided within a public service framework (Steemers, 1998: 108). The burden of expectation regarding plurality and cultural diversity clearly rests with existing public service broadcasting institutions. But regrettably without adequate attention having been paid to the past deficits of these institutions in responding to public concerns and needs, as well as their susceptibility to commercial and political pressures that can diminish programme range and diversity.

Survival strategies

Policy debates focus on the normative expectations of public service broadcasting, but it is also important to examine the ways in which public service broadcasters have extended and amended the public service ethos in relation to a changing communications environment. Public service broadcasting institutions have been formulating and fine-tuning their strategies for many years in response to the loss of monopoly, budgetary restraints, political pressures and the onslaught of less heavily regulated commercial competition. These responses have variously included changes in *programming strategy* (competitive scheduling, extensions in broadcasting hours), *co-operation with third parties* (independent producers, co-producers, joint ventures), *the use of supplementary sources of revenue* (sponsorship, subscription, co-production funding, ancillary revenues from video, and the licensing of products and services associated with programming), *rationalisation strategies*, and changes in *working practices* (see also Achille & Miège, 1994: 33-39).

What is very clear, however, is that the mainstream services like BBC 1 (UK), ARD or ZDF (Germany), FR2 (France), RAI (Italy), and RTVE (Spain) are still important in attracting mass audiences. Their mainstream services are also vital for legitimating the institutions as a whole. These services indicate commitment to mainstream entertainment, event programming, and news, which still attract large audiences and constitute common experiences. At the same time there are clear commercial imperatives at work. It is noticeable that organisations including RTVE and RAI that are quite heavily dependent on advertising income appear to be less distinguishable from their commercial rivals when compared to their counterparts in North West Europe (Hibberd, 2001: 246; McKinsey, 1999: 21-22). ARD and ZDF in Germany, with advertising restricted to 20-minutes a day on television and before 8 p.m., nonetheless pursue a populist programming philosophy at these times to maximise advertising income (Peasey, 1990).

Even public service broadcasters with no reliance on advertising revenue have shown deepening commitments to entertainment, rightly recognising that it constitutes the link with a wider audience. The BBC's recent success with game show formats including the *Weakest Link* and *Dog eat Dog* have not only been hits in a genre more traditionally associated with commercial television, but have also opened a lucrative format/co-production business overseas, particularly on U.S. networks (Interview with Colin Jarvis, 2001). This stands in sharp contrast to an earlier and short-lived policy initiative that the BBC should retreat from 'formula' entertainment formats (BBC, 1992).

Similarly, with the high costs of original television production and increases in transmission capacity, some public service broadcasters have shown themselves to be as adept as their commercial counterparts at competitive scheduling and commissioning strategies. While they continue to make or commission high cost news and drama for peak time transmission, they are also (to varying degrees) increasingly reliant on:

- low cost original production – formatted game shows, talk shows, life-style/consumer/reality programming
- high cost co-productions for premium drama and documentaries to spread costs and risk
- increased use of acquired programming as filler in off-peak periods
- increased use of repeats

While at one level we have thus seen the continuous adjustment of existing services by all broadcasters in response to increased competition, at a second level we also find expansion through new technical possibilities and the launch of new services – especially digital services. Given the financial commitments involved, the more ambitious expansionary plans are typically limited to the larger and wealthier PSB institutions. For such organisations the response has been to re-purpose content and rights across multiple windows, including the Internet and niche channels, in anticipation of changing audience preferences. Niche channels also precisely target audiences and genres favoured by rival commercial operators – i.e., news, children's, arts programming and documentary. This fuels the commercial argument that public service broadcasters are unfairly using public funds to damage the economic survival of commercial competitors at no commercial risk to themselves.

The BBC offers licence-fee funded digital channels News 24, BBC Parliament, BBC Choice (which will become BBC 3 for youth audiences after Government approval in 2002), BBC 4 (arts), and since 2002 CBeebies (for the under 6s) plus CBBC for the 6-13 demographics. In addition to various repeats/time shift services (ARD Digital and ZDF Vision), German public broadcasters jointly offer publicly funded KiKa (children), Phoenix (documentary), 3SAT (cultural programming with Swiss and Austrian public broadcasters) and

Arte (a joint venture cultural channel with French public broadcasters). Since 1997, Spanish broadcaster RTVE has provided up to 7 niche channels under its TV Temática bouquet. Since 1999, RaiSat, a separate division of Italian public broadcaster RAI, has offered seven subscription channels on the Telepiù digital satellite platform. These are Album (archive), Ragazzi (children), Cinema, Gambero Rosso (cookery), Art, Fiction and Show. Although separately operated, there is a dedicated news service, RAI News 24.

With the prospect of decline in generalist channels and changing viewer habits, some public service broadcasters claim they are building a more personalised relationship with the public through more targeted offerings. For example, the former Director of BBC Television, Mark Thompson, spoke about the decline of mixed television schedules and the growing importance of segmenting content into a 'suite' of channels, with each possessing a clear 'proposition or flavour' (2000). This targeting of niche audiences gives rise to suspicions that certain types of content could be removed or marginalised from mainstream services. For example, the launch of children's service Kinderkanal (Kika) in Germany has led to a reduction in children's output on the mainstream ARD and ZDF services. Similarly, in addressing the BBC's application in 2001 for new digital television services (BBC 3, BBC 4, Cbeebies, CBBC), the Secretary of State for Media, Culture and Sport, Tessa Jowell, emphasised that these must not result in a reduction of minority programming on the mainstream channels. Also stressed was the importance of not emulating what was already being provided by the commercial sector – the new services must be distinctive and encourage domestic production (Jowell, 2001).

Some broadcasters are also seeking a wider commercial role that could allow them to capitalise financially on their brands, and thereby complement or subsidise licence-fee funding and programming. The BBC stands out with respect to the global scale of its commercial activities, encompassing programme sales, co-productions, ancillary rights exploitation, joint ventures and international channels, undertaken by its commercial subsidiary, BBC Worldwide.

Of course the BBC enjoys considerable advantages over its public service counterparts in other countries. The BBC has been encouraged by successive UK governments to become an 'international multimedia enterprise' so that supplementary commercial revenues can be fed back into core domestic services. Indeed, the Labour government awarded the Corporation a lower licence fee increase in 1999 in the expectation that the BBC would fill the gap by increasing commercial revenues.

Second, the BBC enjoys 'the language of advantage' (Collins, 1989) in the most lucrative overseas market, the United States. There the BBC is involved in a global partnership with Discovery Communications for joint venture international channels (Animal Planet, People and Arts), factual co-productions (*Walking with Dinosaurs*, *The Blue Planet*), and the marketing of its

own channel, BBC America. This co-operation was extended for a further 10 years in 2002. Partnership with international partners also plays a role in Australia (UKTV) and Canada (BBC Canada, BBC Kids). International partnerships are also mirrored by joint venture subscription channels in the UK with Flextech Television, under the banner UKTV, signalling a break with universal access.

Commercial income from these activities is still small compared to the BBC's licence fee revenues, but it does raise questions about the degree to which this sort of income must fill gaps in inadequate licence fee funding, and at what cost.⁴ For example, an emphasis on international co-productions for fiction and high profile factual output dilutes editorial control and can lead to a neglect of programming aimed specifically at domestic audiences (see Sparks, 1995: 336).

But within Western Europe at large, the BBC's breadth of commercial activity at home and abroad is rather exceptional. In Germany joint venture channels with the private sector, and access to additional advertising or subscription revenues to fund additional channels and services, is subject to constitutional and legislative hurdles that thus far have restricted collaboration (Steeimers, 2001: 78). A previous legal 'grey area' that resulted in online collaboration with MSN for *ZDF.online* and with MSNBC for the *heute.online* news service was brought to an end in 1999 and 2002, respectively, with new legislation that prevents advertising on PSB online services. This subsequently made the ventures unattractive to commercial partners (ARD-Staatsvertrag, 2000). Efforts to launch a German television service in the U.S. appear to be motivated by political and cultural concerns rather than commercial imperatives (Kamman, 2001).

Unlike the BBC, international activities to garner financial benefits do not appear to be such a high priority for other European public broadcasters. Other PSB companies do conclude a limited number of annual co-productions and programme sales, often with same language neighbours (Tunstall & Machin, 1999: 199), but for many the sale of advertising airtime represents a far more important and lucrative commercial activity.

While international commercial engagement is limited for most, children's television offers a prime example of how a genre that has always been considered a key part of the public service remit is being adapted by public service broadcasters to fit a new multi-channel environment with commercial priorities. Traditionally, children's television has been rather less glamorous than other areas and has tended to be marginalised and underfunded. Public broadcasters typically rely on cheap animation imports from the U.S. or the Far East to supplement their children's programming output. But in the right circumstances children can constitute a valuable audience. ARD/ZDF (KiKa, Germany), the BBC (CBeebies, CBBC), RAI (RAISAT Ragazzi), NOS (*Z@ppelin*, Netherlands) and VRT (Ketnet, Belgium) were all launched in response to a perceived need for advertising-free children's programming. But they were also certainly launched in reaction to strong commercial com-

petition – including American providers like Nickelodeon, Disney, Cartoon Network and Fox Family.

Significantly, such channels also provide a useful outlet for screening productions that can prove profitable in other ways. For example, the BBC has established two major pre-school franchises, *Teletubbies* and *Tweenies*, which have been produced in volume and sell well overseas (*Teletubbies* have been shown on KiKa, RaiSat Ragazzi, and Z@ppelin). They also generate substantial merchandising revenues, domestically and abroad. For the BBC these programmes constitute a brand that has a value in ancillary rights and enjoy a long shelf life as each next-generation child audience emerges at regular intervals.

These programmes are also valuable to other public service broadcasters. On the basis of satisfying certain contractual obligations – e.g., that they air them regularly in an agreed slot and promote them in a particular way – they are allowed to participate in merchandising and licensing receipts in their respective territories. This obviously mirrors the practice of commercial broadcasters (Interview with BBC Worldwide Executive, November 2001). Of course children's television within Western Europe has long been a key area for co-production and presales because of low domestic budgets. But there is a danger that pressures to find funding or the attractions of benefiting from ancillary rights could advantage certain types of children's programming over others – for example character-based shows or animation series over a broader mix that would also include children's drama or information programming.

Conclusion: Managing distinctions

At the beginning of this paper it was argued that public service broadcasting institutions in many countries have actually survived fairly well in today's more competitive environment – they have learned to adapt. As is the case for all broadcasters, private or public, they face undoubted challenges in a future few can gauge with certainty. There is still a strong case for public provision unencumbered by the profit motive in the media entertainment and communication market to function as a safeguard for pluralism and diversity. Yet arguments about market failure are undermined if there is a perception (correctly or not) that public service broadcasters are becoming little different from their commercial rivals in strategies, objectives and programming output – be that heavier dependence on commercial revenues, or the pursuit of more 'commercial' scheduling and channel strategies.

Thus, failing to demonstrate both uniqueness and appeal across a broad range of output, the consensus surrounding public funding could conceivably dissolve. Moreover, with the current difficulties faced by commercial television, the questioning of public service broadcasting's 'distinctive' role is quite

likely to increase. At the same time, greater thought needs to be given to alternative and complementary forms of public provision which may be better suited at meeting changes in communications needs, content, and delivery forms than the large-scale, public institution framework. Finally, if public provision in television is justified on the grounds of market failure, this strongly implies co-related justification for what may turn out to be the 'functional equivalents' of broadcasting in new media (Hoffmann-Riem, 1996: 342).

It is of course much easier to criticise public service broadcasters than to offer workable solutions. Public broadcasters must manage a difficult balance between redefining their remit in a rapidly changing communications environment and, at the same time, securing sufficient funding sources that do not compromise that remit. And in each country they must do this while dealing with the prevailing political climate. Increasing reliance on commercial sources of funding has been one response to budgetary pressures and inadequate allocation of public funding. But increasing reliance on commercial income can undermine the case for public funding altogether.

Some (like the BBC) are likely to survive in the multi-channel marketplace as a quality brand, but the 'purist' principles on which that brand is founded may recede as commercial priorities affect both its internal culture and its creative output. On the other hand, there is always a risk of marginalisation with the 'purer' form of public service broadcasting. And so what are we left with? Mainly we are left with commercial/public service hybrids that carry both the benefits and the disadvantages of each model. The difficult task for publicly funded public service broadcasters is therefore to ensure that the pressures and attractions of the marketplace do not overwhelm the public service profile that sets them apart from commercial counterparts.

Notes

1. Some of the research referred to in this chapter was made possible by financial support in 2001-2002 from The Leverhulme Trust for a project entitled 'Selling British Television'
2. For example, public broadcasters in Germany achieved a 40% share in 2000 (Darschin & Kayser, 2001, p.163). In 2001 BBC 1 achieved higher ratings than its rival ITV (Brown, 2001, pp.2-3).
3. In the case of Germany for example, ARD and ZDF still offer more information than their commercial counterparts and this information is qualitatively different with a greater emphasis on political and economic themes (See Krüger, 2001, pp. 326-344).
4. In 2001/2002 BBC Worldwide had a turnover of £660m and contributed £106m to the BBC in cashflow and £81m in programme investment compared to over £2.5 billion in licence fee revenues (BBC Worldwide, 2002).

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U.S. Public Broadcasting and the Business of Public Service

Alan G. Stavitsky & Robert K. Avery

To the student of European public service broadcasting, the United States system of public broadcasting must seem needlessly complex and inefficient. The U.S. model, however, should be understood in the context of the crucible of American broadcasting in which it developed. That context situated U.S. public broadcasting on the margins of American media and disenfranchised the noncommercial sector from its very beginnings, more than eight decades ago. The mission-versus-market issues that vex contemporary U.S. public broadcasters are rooted in this history, and it has shaped their response to the challenges and opportunities of digital convergence.

Mission, market, and media at the margins

American radio emerged in a period of great faith in the social responsibility of private enterprise. As Rowland has noted, during the 1920s the assumption reigned that “the best public services would emerge in a largely unfettered private enterprise” (1993: 158). The structure of U.S. broadcasting was locked in during this formative period: a privately controlled, entertainment-driven commercial system, dominated by national networks, accompanied by an under-funded, widely dispersed group of noncommercial stations, generally based at universities and acting, in Raymond Williams’ words, “as a palliative” (1974: 37). Though critics soon began to challenge the public service performance of the commercial broadcasters, the regulatory authority, the Federal Communications Commission [FCC], governed with a light touch. The approach emphasized technical matters and trusted largely in networks and private stations to police themselves in matters of content. This was mainly to be handled through the National Association of Broadcasters [NAB] trade group.

It’s interesting to note that Charles Siepman, a former BBC programmer, oversaw one of the FCC’s most significant broadcast reform initiatives. He

was charged with developing standards for FCC regulation of public-service performance in what came to be known as the ‘Blue Book,’ so called for the color of its cover (Federal Communications Commission, 1946). When the Blue Book was published in 1946, it was attacked by the NAB as an attempt to bring BBC-style “state” broadcasting to the United States. Indeed, the values of the British, European and Canadian public-service models were seldom understood by American broadcasters and policymakers; they tended to be dismissed as systems captured by government, as opposed to the “free” system of U.S. broadcasting (Avery, 1993).

While commercial radio cultivated an audience with mass appeal entertainment fare, noncommercial stations, known as “educational radio,” emphasized instructional and high-culture programming. But unlike their international counterparts, U.S. educational broadcasters seldom produced the range of program genres that would attract a broad, general audience. Accordingly, when federal succor came to noncommercial broadcasting as part of the “Great Society” social-policy initiatives of the 1960s, advocates renamed the enterprise *public* broadcasting. With the semantic shift came the assumption that public radio and now TV would reach a larger audience with more diverse, attractive programming, fueled with the federal funding from the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967.

Though this seminal legislation vitalized a moribund, *ad hoc* collection of educational stations into a functional public broadcasting system with shared national programming, the 1967 act failed to address questions of mission. In contrast to the charters of European public-service broadcasters, which spoke of social goals and outlined responsibilities, the U.S. law essentially told public broadcasters what they were *not* to be: commercial.

This was largely a function of history, law and culture. American broadcasting, of course, developed in a manner quite opposite the European case. While in most European countries, public-service systems were well established before commercial broadcasting was introduced, commercial radio and TV had ruled the U.S. airwaves for decades by 1967. Commercial broadcasters acquiesced to the establishment of a noncommercial adjunct with the understanding that public stations would generally provide serious, high-brow program fare that did not represent a major competitive threat in terms of audience and advertising revenue. (Consider that then-U.S. President Lyndon Johnson himself owned commercial broadcast stations in Texas). This helps explain the historical resistance in the United States to using direct advertising to fund public programming, which is part of the funding mix in many other countries, as near as Canada.

The lack of mission guidance in the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, and its amendments through the years, also flows from the U.S. legal tradition of free expression. “Congress shall make no law”, reads the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, “...abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press”. Though politicians have a long history of intervening in the editorial affairs of public broadcasters, they have done so primarily by threatening – whether

explicitly or implicitly – to cut funding. Given the expansive way in which U.S. courts have generally interpreted First Amendment protections over time, legislators are loath to enact laws that may be seen as proscribing media behavior.

Further, the United States lacks a strong tradition of discourse about the role of media in the national culture. While nations in the European Union, for example, debate the cultural implications of media products, parallel U.S. discourse is less sophisticated and more episodic, usually occasioned by some case of media excess, such as offensive antics by radio disc jockeys seeking to attract attention. As such, commentary about public broadcasting is limited to reviews of programs in the popular press, polemics by critics on the political left and right, and periodic academic analysis (cf. Avery, 2001). This situation is exacerbated by the schism between U.S. public broadcasters and the academic community in the wake of the 1981 demise of the National Association of Educational Broadcasters, the trade association that linked the two (Witherspoon, Kovitz, Avery & Stavitsky, 2000: iv-v). Whereas European academics often interact with their public-service broadcasters, in the manner of the RIPE conference that spawned this volume, American academics seldom have such opportunities.

As a result of these forces, taken together and in the absence of a detailed articulation of what constitutes public service, how U.S. public broadcasters have come to interpret their mission has largely been shaped by funding imperatives. True, European public-service broadcasters face many of the same competitive pressures as do the Americans. However, most U.S. public broadcasters were cast into the market without a heritage of mission and audience loyalty.

The problem of ‘the public’

The increased money and attention wrought by the 1967 act forced public broadcasting to confront the problem of its ‘publicness.’ That is, educational broadcasters had previously felt beholden primarily to the university presidents or charitable foundation heads who were their benefactors, as opposed to listeners and viewers. Post 1967, as the recipients of public tax dollars and with a mandate to serve a wider audience, public broadcasters had to be accountable to a variety of constituencies: notably Congress, which authorizes federal support, and an amorphous ‘public,’ in whose name they were licensed.

Assuring accountability has proven awkward. Congressional oversight of public broadcasting has regularly wandered into areas of editorial interference with programming, despite institutional ‘heat-shield’ structures intended to keep legislators at arm’s length. For example, a July 2002 legislative hearing ostensibly to assess public broadcasting’s transition to digital transmission devolved into Congressional criticism of National Public Radio’s cover-

age of the Middle East; this followed a vocal campaign by American Jewish groups that blasted NPR journalism as pro-Palestinian (U.S. Congress, 2002). Parallel scrutiny of public television programming by Congressional Republicans followed disclosures that some public television stations had made lists of station donors available to Democratic candidates.

Though many Americans consider U.S. public broadcasting to be publicly funded in the manner of European systems, most U.S. public radio and television stations actually receive most of their funding from non-tax-based sources. On average, allocation support (which may include funding from state and local governments, as well as universities) accounted for about 40 percent of station funding, according to the most recent data. The rest came from listener and viewer contributions and from corporate underwriting – quasi-commercial on-air mentions of businesses that pay fees to stations to get their names before public broadcasting's upscale audience (Corporation for Public Broadcasting, 2002). Because government support of U.S. public broadcasting has waned during the past two decades, congruent with global trends, private funding has become critical for operational success. This has brought increased attention by public broadcasters to what listeners and viewers *want* to hear and see.

The emphasis on audience measurement data (the 'ratings') has resulted in changing models of public broadcast programming (Stavitsky, 1995a, 1998). Many public radio stations have 'focused' their formats, in the manner of commercial radio, stressing their core service, such as news or jazz music, and eliminating programs seen as ancillary, including those that serve fringe or minority communities (Stavitsky, 1994; Witherspoon, Kovitz, Avery & Stavitsky, 2000).

In public TV, notably the stations affiliated with the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), audience and underwriter awareness has prompted an emphasis at many stations on non-controversial, corporate-friendly fare. Examples would include Ken Burns' epic historical documentaries, 'how-to' programs about cooking and home repair, and musical extravaganzas aimed at baby boomers (Bullert, 1997; Hoynes, 1994; Witherspoon, Kovitz, Avery & Stavitsky, 2000: 101-106). In addition, many long-running, classic PBS programs are being reevaluated to assess their appeal to younger viewers who tend to spend most of their screen time watching cable channels, if not videos or DVDs.

Further, public radio and television stations have generally reduced the amount of locally based production to invest more resources in national programming. This change is linked with audience researchers' claims that such is more attractive to listeners and viewers, even if incongruent with public broadcasting's heritage of 'localism' in which broadcasters speak to their communities about local issues in local voices (Stavitsky, 1994). In addition, as satellite distribution costs come down and broadband offers new transmission channels, it's often less expensive for stations to broadcast programs produced elsewhere.

However, these market-driven changes have drawn fire from some producers and critics. They argue that public broadcasting's attempts to become more popular run counter to its mission of providing an alternative to commercial media, i.e. to serve unserved audiences, to elevate the democratic discourse, and to provide an outlet for cultural expression. "I think we have to stay true to our mission," says veteran public TV programmer Peter McGhee. "Our mission is different than commercial television and cable. Their mission is to run a profitable business. Our mission is to inform, educate and inspire" (quoted in Ryan, 2002: L1).

But how to achieve such high purpose remains contentious. One high-profile theatre of conflict during the 1990s was Pacifica Radio, the avowedly left-wing chain of community radio stations, which was rocked by lawsuits, death threats and heated protest over management's plans to professionalize and streamline programming to reach a larger audience (Janssen, 2002). The architect of the radio reform, Pat Scott, was vilified as a "Yuppie Stalinist" (Stavitsky, 1995b: 90). Public radio personality Garrison Keillor, speaking of public radio generally, lamented the influx of "(g)uys in suits with charts and pages of numbers. I think this is a pretty dreadful development" (*Thoughts from Lake Wobegon*, 1994: 58).

Still, leaders of U.S. public broadcasting stress that they are not providing a significant public service if they fail to reach a significant audience. And, they note, in the absence of abundant public funding they must attract an audience sufficiently loyal to personally donate money, and also sufficiently upscale to please corporate underwriters. They refer to the contemporary situation as "viewer sensitive", meaning that the economy of public broadcasting today is sensitive to the size of the audience and its satisfaction with the product. Further, striking a balance between remaining true to traditional mission goals while meeting market goals is made more difficult by the challenges of multi-channel, multimedia competition.

Turf wars

Commercial media have laid siege to program genres that once were the domain of public broadcasters. Given the plethora of video channels wrought by cable and satellite, U.S. media have become *demassified*, focusing on narrow audience segments, including the upscale viewers of public TV. No longer is PBS the only place to find children's fare, or public affairs, or historical or science documentary. Disney and Nickelodeon program for kids, the History Channel and Discovery target the documentary audience, while numerous cable channels provide news and talk around the clock. It should also be noted that new PBS President Pat Mitchell, a former CNN documentary producer, was promising at this writing that public television would upgrade its news-gathering capabilities and address more hard-hitting public-affairs topics in the post-9/11 environment.

While in-depth news and ‘serious music’ formats were largely unique to public stations on the radio dial until recently, the launch of two new satellite-radio services poses a threat from space. XM and Sirius Satellite Radio each offer up to 100 niche audio channels – from classical music to comedy to car racing – delivered to your car or home for a monthly subscription fee. Though the new services have been slow to catch on, there’s concern in public radio circles that the satellite subscriber drawn to all-opera and business-news channels, to name but two, may decide to stop supporting her local public radio station.

In this mediascape, it is not surprising that public broadcasting programmers seek to “super-serve the core,” a catch phrase for targeting those people most likely to listen and watch public stations – and to support them financially. Public radio research guru David Giovannoni describes it this way: “The way to serve your public better? Focus on a single audience and serve that audience extremely, insanely well” (quoted in Freedman, 2001: 32).

Social capital or market capital?

The concept of ‘social capital’ has emerged as a guiding principle for many U.S. public broadcasters in this challenging environment. The idea was popularized by scholar Robert Putnam’s influential book, *Bowling Alone* (2000). The title was based on the decrease in the number of bowling leagues in the U.S., which Putnam traced to a general decline in community life. Putnam stressed that social capital is accumulated through social interaction, makes our lives more productive and rewarding, and fosters the development of civil society. He cited public broadcasting as a “classic example of a public good” and noted that communities with high levels of social capital, as measured by civic participation, provide strong support for public stations. Why? Because, Putnam argued, “civic norms sustain an expanded sense of ‘self-interest’ and a firmer confidence in reciprocity” (pp. 348-349).

Key public broadcasting leaders have thus seized the notion that their stations can play a role in rebuilding a sense of community. A consultant’s report advised American public TV to “identify opportunities in which content and services can be leveraged to build social capital and stimulate civic engagement in your community” (*CPB Future Fund*, 2001: 6). In the same document, Putnam himself noted a payoff for public broadcasters “(i)f they can figure out ways to get people to engage in community life, that will solve their problems because those kind of people will be involved” with their local stations (p.6). The concern is that some public broadcasters, in lieu of striving to actually *make* themselves more relevant in their communities, will just *market* themselves as such.

However, the social capital movement, along with other progressive strains of thinking about public media, *has* spawned numerous high-profile attempts

at developing innovative content and services. These include “civic journalism” projects that aim for substantive political coverage, focused on campaign issues rather than simply campaign strategy, often in partnership with local newspapers and civic groups. Public TV has ‘rediscovered’ its educational roots and is proposing new instructional services, especially utilizing the added bandwidth offered by digital TV. Public radio, mindful of the need to lure younger listeners and minorities, developed a “Youth Radio” series produced by teens, as well as talk programs on African-American, Latino and Native-American topics. Further, some public broadcasters are swimming against the national tide by rededicating themselves to localism markets – in realization of the fact that most new satellite- or web-driven media are centralized (cf. Stavitsky, Avery and Vanhala, 2001).

Such projects reflect a new understanding that *it is public service that makes public support possible*. So, it could be said that public broadcasters should engage vigorously in the *business of public service*, not merely by superseding the core or obsessing over new revenue streams, but rather by developing new programming forms and services that engage people.

Yet, for all the efforts touted by public broadcasters as evidence of their public-service commitment, some critics remained intractable. In the spring of 2000, a grassroots movement, Citizens for Independent Public Broadcasting [CIPB], emerged, supported by foundation grants and determined to pressure PBS and NPR to restore diversity as a programming ideal, even at the risk of offending mainstream audiences. CIPB sought to mobilize local chapters of activists to engage station management, and filed comments with the FCC to challenge the national organizations’ efforts to use part of their allocations of digital spectrum for commercial, revenue-generating purposes.

Academic critics added to the debate. Avery and Stavitsky (2003) analyzed the FCC filings of the America’s Public Television Stations [APTS] trade group and found APTS’ rhetorical arguments were incongruent with contemporary public TV programming, with its mainstream, upscale appeal and ties to enhanced underwriting. Similarly, Hoynes (2002) argued that the “new PBS brand,” which was promoted as meeting public-interest obligations of diversity and service to marginalized audiences, instead reflected movement in the direction of service to elite viewers whose donations were critical to system survival.

Digitization and convergence

The transition to digital transmission modes represents a defining moment for public broadcasters. Added bandwidth may be viewed solely in terms of its revenue-generating possibilities, such as leasing airspace to commercial operators or transmitting data for businesses. Such is fast becoming the nature of telecommunications in the so-called “Network Economy” (cf. Lessig, 2001; Rifkin, 2000). Indeed some public broadcasters who control multiple broad-

cast licenses are considering selling off secondary stations to commercial entities to raise funds for program production and the digital transition for their primary channels. Such measures are understandable, given U.S. public broadcasting's chronic under-funding, but the industry must tread carefully.

Two issues in the summer of 2002 demonstrate the conundrum. Leaders of the public television system agreed to relax their rules governing corporate underwriting announcements (Everhart, 2002). Corporate mascots will now be allowed in Public Broadcasting Service underwriting 'spots,' closing the gap between the look of such announcements and full-fledged commercials. Making public television more 'friendly' to corporations is seen as necessary in the face of commercial competition and declining numbers of station contributors. Yet at the same time, the U.S. Congress was considering legislation that would create a trust fund to support "public interest" digital media. The endowment would be funded by proceeds from spectrum auctions and would help public broadcasters make the transition to digital transmission and fund educational programming. With many competing demands for the expected windfall from the sale of spectrum to telecommunication providers, the case for public broadcasting in this and similar initiatives would be weakened by quasi-commercial activities.

Viewed in this light, the value of public broadcasting would be measured not only by the number of people who tune in but also, to use a museum analogy, by the 'quality of the collection.' This fits well with talk of the 'reinvention' of U.S. broadcasting in the digital age, from providing a flow of programs that aggregates audience members to providing an array of programs and services on audience demand (cf. Lessig, 2001; Murdock, 2000). Former PBS President Larry Grossman has proposed a so-called "Grand Alliance" to accomplish this, in which public broadcasters partner with local museums, libraries and schools to produce and make available educational and informational programs, both on air and online.

Other thinkers seek to exploit digital plenty. PBS is experimenting with promoting its programs on TiVO, a video-storage platform that enables viewers to manage their TV watching by designating not only their favorite programs to record, but also their favorite program genres. Public radio futurists are investigating an audio equivalent. Further, public radio networks are programming channels for the two new satellite-radio services, mentioned earlier, even though the sat-casters are seen as a threat to terrestrial radio. Such initiatives, coupled with public broadcasting's extensive web-based services, represent important attempts to innovate with the mode of transmission.

Without a doubt, attracting ears and eyeballs to public broadcasting today requires careful attention to audience analysis, to effective program scheduling, and to sophisticated utilization of digital tools. Ultimately, however, it comes down to *content*.

At their best, American public broadcasters have been celebrated for incisive, responsible journalism and creative, accessible cultural fare. Today's

market-driven exuberance must be tempered by realization that it's the role of public broadcasters to provide a place of measured thought amid the cacophony and hype of the multi-channel U.S. mediascape. They must distinguish themselves from their commercial counterparts, to engage listeners and viewers as citizens and as individuals seeking enlightenment, and, yes, even entertainment.

In sum, a public broadcasting system that is important in the lives of people will be supported by those people – whether directly by contributions, as in the U.S. model, or indirectly in the form of political capital that assures tax-based support. Such a system will be true to the spirit of the public service mission, even if the letter of that mission, in the U.S. content, is lacking. In the final accounting, however, until the stewards of federal communication policy seek to articulate clearly a remit for U.S. public broadcasting – and provide sustainable financial support – its practitioners will continue to struggle in search of mission.

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Bringing Public Service Broadcasting to Account

Karol Jakubowicz

“All publicly-funded bodies in the 1990s are, or should be, directly and visibly accountable for delivering, against clearly defined objectives, the highest standards of performance to the public they serve” – thus wrote the BBC Board of Governors in *An Accountable BBC*, a brochure published in 1993.

This is true, of course, and media accountability is a growth industry today (McQuail, 1997; Smith, 2002, WRTVC 2002a, 2002b), but one wonders if the governors had an inkling then of what a high-stakes game accountability of public service broadcasting would become a mere 10 years later. It could, without exaggeration, be described as a life-or-death struggle for PSB broadcasters. There is increasing pressure on the public service media to account for everything they do, while progressively “lighter touch” regulation seems to be the future for the commercial media¹.

The reason for this is that in the media policy environment of the early 21st Century – based on recognising limitations of government and policy-making, while competition and self-regulation are promoted (McQuail, 1998, 2000) – PSB is increasingly portrayed as an exception to the ‘normal’ rules applying to broadcasting and audiovisual industries. Commercialism and economic objectives take pride of place in media policy, with “marketization” in the ascendant (Murdock and Golding, 1999). The whole notion of the public interest in mass communication is in question (Brants et al, 1998).

As commercial media grow in power, they are able to affect government policy more and more. One of their objectives in this is certainly the marginalization of public service media as a market competitor. While PSB is presented as an exception today, it is likely to be defined as an anomaly tomorrow, and a useless throwback to a long-gone era the day after tomorrow. Hence in part the European Union saga of debating the financing of public service broadcasting, to which we will return below. Governments and regulators are under pressure to justify their policies *vis-à-vis* PSB². PSB broadcasters are more and more often required to justify their very existence.

Although a wide array of accountability mechanisms already exist³, public service broadcasters are encouraged or obliged to extend them or de-

velop new ones. Meanwhile, the essential modernisation of the concept of PSB and its adjustment to new realities may be prevented by the very accountability systems being introduced today. If that happens, we will have seen a self-fulfilling prophecy in operation: a campaign to question the need for PSB will indeed prove that there is no justification for its continued existence – in the outdated form that accountability systems may force it to preserve. What clearly hangs in the balance is the future of the typically European dual system of broadcasting. All the lip service paid to PSB by governments notwithstanding, we may be seeing the beginnings of a growing momentum ultimately to replace it with a single-sector system comprising nothing but commercial and increasingly consolidated broadcasters.

The sentence cited at the outset seems simple. In fact, every word is a potential trap. “Publicly-funded”, “directly and visibly accountable”; “clearly defined objectives”; “the highest standards of performance”; “the public they serve” – only a very naïve public service broadcaster would assume that these concepts are self-explanatory. Far from it: every one of them has become the object of a pitched battle. The way these battles are decided will be crucial for the future of PSB.

Even leaving all the above considerations aside, accountability is a requirement for public service broadcasting, and it is one that poses serious methodological and other problems. Media accountability is a growth industry, as noted above, but has yet produced few definitive answers. Our objective here is primarily to take stock of the way it has developed so far in relation to PSB.

First, we will review some of the issues involved in creating a PSB accountability system and offer examples of how this is done. The major stumbling block to creating such a system is precisely defining the objectives and standards of performance, as well as ways of serving the public – in short, defining PSB itself, a matter far from finished. We will review existing models of PSB, including two recent efforts by the European Broadcasting Union’s Digital Strategy Group and the European Commission, to advance the job of creating a contemporary understanding of PSB. They are by no means conclusive, and since the likelihood of one definition of PSB being accepted by all countries is practically nil, no universal system of accountability can be expected. Different systems will have to be used, depending on the nature of PSB in each country. In addition, given the multi-faceted nature of PSB organisations and their different activities, we will conclude by suggesting that perhaps the only way forward may be to disaggregate the activities of PSB broadcasters and assess different activities with the use of different criteria.

PSB accountability dilemmas

Accountability has long been recognised as a defining feature of public service broadcasting, but in the past it involved mostly “licensed participants” (broad-

casters, politicians, intellectual and cultural elite), whereas “often shut out were the voices of ordinary viewers and listeners, to whose *opinions* (as distinct from *attendance*, measured by ratings), the system was largely indifferent” (Blumler, Hoffman-Riem, 1992: 219). In short, the system involved “upward” lines of accountability *vis-à-vis* power holders and the elite, rather than “downward” lines of accountability to the audience/public.

Raymond Williams (1968: 117-118) has defined PSB as a paternal system whose duty is to protect, guide and to develop the majority in ways thought desirable by the minority. By contrast, Syvertsen (1999: 6-7) has noted that a current definition of ‘public service’ involves a concept of the public as individual consumers of the media, whereby the prime purpose of PSB is to satisfy the interests and preferences of individual consumers rather than the needs of the collective, i.e. the citizenry. It is obvious that these two views of PSB would prompt radically different answers to the main questions involved in any accountability system (e.g. what it should account for, to whom it should be accountable, and how it should render an account for what it does).

Accounting for What?

The answer would appear to be simple: “performance”, i.e. content, quality and benefits claimed or looked for from media. However, if by ‘performance’ one means programming, the debate (e.g. within the European Union, see Harrison and Woods, 2001) about whether PSB should be defined in quantifiable terms purely by genres of programming, or whether a more qualitative definition is needed, already poses a problem. A quantitative approach (as suggested, for example, by the European Commission’s DG IV in 1998, see below) would make PSB accountability relatively easy, depending, of course, on the methods adopted for the purpose⁴. Hellman (2001) shows, however, that any attempt to analyse the diversity of programming content on PSB channels immediately runs into complex methodological problems.

In addition, PSB ‘performance’ is often defined also in terms of more wide-ranging benefits to be derived from its existence. These include, for example,

- redressing market failure and “wider economic benefits”, flowing from having a better informed and educated public (NERA, 1991);
- a benchmarking and standard-setting role for commercial broadcasters, shaping the broadcasting ecology (McKinsey & Company, 1999);
- social and structural benefits flowing from the coexistence of different sectors of broadcasting, with PSB accountable for serving that society in ways it requires (Graham, 2000).

It seems unlikely that a rigorous accountability system that would capture these indirect effects of the proper performance of PSB could be created.

What, however, of financial accountability? Of the economic “performance measures” listed by Picard (2002a), “revenue growth” can be used only for advertising, programme sales and other commercial income. “Productivity measures” are more appropriate, though in some cases they may be difficult to apply, given the PSB mandate to experiment, try untested programme formats and provide artistic, cultural and educational programming. ‘Results’, too, need to be analysed differently, depending on the exact nature of the type of activity under consideration.

Yet another area of accountability concerns “audience performance”, a particularly difficult issue for PSB broadcasters facing strong competitors and trying to preserve their distinctiveness (see e.g. Picard, 2002b). “Audience performance” is traditionally measured with the use of such criteria as ratings and audience share. However, ‘audience performance’ should also be measured in terms of public satisfaction with the programme service and of how much consumption of PSB programming is valued either in absolute or relative terms, or how differently it is perceived from the commercial alternatives (Ellis, 2002). Value attached by the audience to their PSB viewing or listening experience and to time spent with this type of programming is another criterion to apply (Curry, Bourne, 2002).

According to a BBC view (Mundy, 2000/2001), traditional measures of public broadcaster success (reach, share and range of genres shown in peak times) remain important. While audience share is not a critical measure in itself, any PSB broadcaster that fails to achieve ‘good levels’ of share loses the opportunity to direct viewers from popular programmes to more challenging ones via promotion. However, it believes that another measure of measuring performance needs to be added, and that is “approval” (expressed in such sentiments as: “Overall approval of the BBC”, “glad the BBC exists”, “value the service the BBC provides”, “the BBC provides something the market does not”, “the BBC offers good value for money”). Another measure is “memorability of output”, defined as both high audience/high memorability (the programmes people talk about at work the next day), and niche audience/high memorability (“TV that strikes a chord and inspires me as an individual”). If a broadcaster can increase the share of memorable output (by creating compelling content in the programmes and genres that fit in with the PSB mission) that matches the wants and needs of all its audiences, then approval will grow.

If it were not for all the accountability requirements imposed on, or voluntarily accepted by the BBC, this could sound as the easy way out: all you need to do is to run a few polls and if the public pronounces itself as satisfied, your accountability exercise is successfully concluded.

Accounting to Whom?

Following Born (2002), we may distinguish three forms of accountability and audit procedures: (i) external regulation; (ii) self-regulation: externally-oriented; (iii) self-regulation: internally-oriented⁵.

Depending on the particular frame of accountability (McQuail, 2000: 183-187) applied, the external partners in an external accountability relationship will vary:

1. In the case of the law and regulation frame, it is the lawmakers, public authorities and the regulator.
2. In the public responsibility frame, it is the public⁶.
3. In the professional responsibility frame, it is professional and artistic elites and their organisations.

Of course the choice of which frames of responsibility applies depends, in the first place, on the choice of the model for PSB in a particular country (e.g. the market frame is certainly relevant to some extent for all PSB broadcasters partly financed from advertising).

Responsibility/accountability systems are usually imposed by lawmakers and regulators, and they usually serve as primary accountability partners. Still, all public service broadcasters include in their organisational structure a governing or supervisory body, designed (in theory, at least) to represent the interests of society in general and charged with the task of overseeing the operations of the organisation. In the Netherlands, the power of the NOS supervisory board to appoint a 5-person group of experts responsible for conducting the audit of PSB performance in the whole country may perhaps be seen as a signal that also this element of the supervisory and accountability system of PSB is coming in for reassessment and enhancement.

Another clear indication of this trend are recent changes in the system of BBC governance (see BBC, 2002), resulting from preparations in the UK to introduce a three-tier structure of regulation and licensing. In Tier 3, the BBC will be primarily subject to self-regulation, with the Board of Governors assuming primary responsibility in this area. The office of the Canadian CBC Ombudsman offers another example of an internal accountability mechanism.

Many PSB broadcasters have developed forms of communicating their objectives and pledges to the public in an attempt to enhance their legitimacy in this way. Born (2002), for example, points to the BBC's "frenetic and visible performance of self-regulation" which includes the BBC Programme Complaints Unit, the Board of Governors' "The BBC Listens"; 4-yearly review of services: expert and public opinion; public consultations on changes and new services; *BBC Online* inviting feedback on the *Annual Report* etc.; Governors' seminars; *Annual Statement of Promises*, etc.

Another example are the CBC rolling corporate plans (*Our Commitment to Canadians* for 1999/00 to 2003/04, *Entering the New Millennium* for 2000-

2001 to 2004-2005, and *Renewing and Strengthening the CBC* for 2001-2002 to 2005-2006).

An interesting case of such externally-oriented self-regulation is the 2001-2003 *Corporate Plan* (SBS, n.d.) adopted by Australia's Special Broadcasting Service. It specifies objectives in four key performance areas (programmes and audiences; "Relationships with our Community"; "SBS 's People"; and business activities), and in addition defines performance indicators by which the corporation is prepared to be judged. However, many of them are of a purely formal nature. This and the fact that no performance indicators have been formulated for some archetypical PSB objectives⁷ illustrates the difficulty of accounting for the performance of a public service broadcaster.

Accounting How?

Examples cited above already list a wide variety of methods of rendering an account for what PSB organisations do. Outlining "possible ways forward" in developing PSB accountability in the new era of competitive broadcasting, Blumler and Hoffman-Riem (1992) proposed that a public accountability system should be conceived as a set of interconnecting elements, since no single one of them can do the whole job. They highlight six elements for such a system:

1. Enhancing the autonomy and role in organisational decisions of media professionals (journalists and others) who should be involved in determining organisational policy together with the management;
2. Greater involvement for social scientific research into mass communication, more interchange between researchers and management bodies and public interest advocates;
3. Greater involvement of social groups in debates of broadcasting policy;
4. Greater involvement of, and attention to, the views of radio and television critics in the press and elsewhere;
5. A greater role for citizens' organisations in broadcasting accountability, so the debate is not confined to the elite alone;
6. Periodic appointment of bodies (e.g. National or Regional Television Fora) which would bring together all these various strands of opinion and would be responsible for the agenda and quality of the broadcasting policy debate.

Not much has survived from these idealistic proposals. As we have seen, "upward" lines of largely formalised accountability (reports, audits, execution of licence obligations, etc.) continue to prevail.

This takes the form, for example, of 'public service audits' developed in Scandinavian countries. Swedish public service broadcasters submit annual

reports to regulators, covering total output in relation to pluralism and variety, focus areas of public service (democracy, culture and entertainment), audience use and attitudes to services and use of resources, reflecting changes in efficiency and productivity. Similar audits are conducted in Denmark and Norway and are being introduced in Finland (Hulten, 2002).

Elsewhere, licences or authorisations of some sort are issued to PSB broadcasters (Canada, South Africa, the Netherlands, the Flemish Community of Belgium, and, soon, Poland) and they are required to make detailed statements of programme policy and to be accountable for their implementation (see Mendel, 2000).

The Dutch and British schemes include an element of “regulated self-regulation” (Schultz, Held, 2001), providing for broadcaster involvement in defining its own programme obligations. However, the British system proposed in the new “Communications Bill” will give the regulator and government extensive powers to shape or determine the remit and programme policy of PSB broadcasters⁸.

Defining public service broadcasting and what it should be accountable for

As can be seen from the above, little headway can be made in developing an accountability system until we have a clear and universally accepted definition of public service broadcasting with its tasks and objectives (and therefore of the criteria to be applied in assessing its performance).

In the past, state/public service broadcasting did not need anything more than “a generalized mandate” (some broadly worded obligations in legal documents; Blumler (1992: 8). Today, if the PSB regulatory framework is to form an exception to general market- and competition-oriented media regulation, there must be a clearly defined conception of such broadcasting (Born, Prosser, 2001). At the same time, however, public service broadcasting is becoming more and more diversified as it develops new forms, making the job of defining it even more difficult. Defining public service broadcasting is by now a favourite pastime (for an overview see Jakubowicz, 2000; see also Syvertsen, 1992, 1999), so much so that ultimately that definition, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder⁹.

A number of quite varied models of public service broadcasting co-exist in Europe today. Before we look at them, let us clarify related work undertaken by the EBU Digital Strategy Group (DSG) because it offers a framework. The Group found that a possible point of departure for describing public service broadcasting is a combination of three central features or elements in a “contract”, bestowed upon a broadcasting institution by society: (i) its obligations to society, (ii) the regulatory framework required for it to produce and distribute the programming by which it fulfils its obligations, and (iii) the method of financing its activities (*Media with a Purpose*, 2002).

PSB obligations and programme quality are seen here as the central feature of the definition of public broadcasting, ensuring its distinctiveness from commercial competitors. Public service broadcasters are obliged to serve the whole of society by enhancing, developing and serving social, political and cultural citizenship. Distinctiveness is no longer sufficiently achieved solely in terms of programme content, which is why the DSG points out that today correcting “market failure” need not mean only provision of genres and programme types that are not available elsewhere. It also means the provision of public content (free-to-air radio and television) otherwise only offered on a pay-TV basis.

Further, in performing their obligations the PSB broadcasters’ role is to provide media content with the following characteristics:

- Universality of content, understood as both universality of basic supply on generalist channels (including mass-appeal, entertainment programming), that will be central to what public service broadcasters offer to the public, and also universality across the full portfolio of services, some of them specialized or tailored for specific audiences, adding up to a more extended and comprehensive range of services;
- Universality of access, signifying presence on “all significant media and platforms” with significant penetration, but also the ability to deliver a “personalized public service” in the “pull”, online and on-demand environment
- Editorial Independence;
- High quality of services and of output;
- Accountability.

The DSG accepts that publicly funded broadcasters might also have activities outside the public service remit, and finance those on a commercial basis. The DSG also observes that because of technological change (multi-media and the change in the media value chain) public broadcasters cannot, in the long run, avoid co-operation with commercial companies because they perform gate-keeping functions. Co-operation is essential to avoid losing access to the audience: “Thus, it might be more and more difficult to separate public broadcasting from the commercial market and its sources of financing, and to draw a clear line between commercial and non-commercial activities” (*Media with a Purpose*, 2002).

This necessarily eclectic view of PSB (universality of content, but also thematic channels; universality of access, but also “personalized public service”; distinctiveness, but also commercial activities) illustrates the difficulties involved in defining PSB and developing an appropriate accountability system.

But the DSG conceptual framework also makes it possible to analyse the models now appearing in the European debate in terms of the main features of PSB.

Table 1. Models of PSB appearing in the European debate

PSB MODEL	FEATURES					
	Distinctive- ness	Universa- lity of access	Universa- lity of content	Indepen- dence	Accounta- bility	Funding
Attrition model	High	High	High	Low	High	n.a.
Distributed public service "Monastery" model	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Comm..
Classical model	High	High	Low	Low	High	Public
Semi-commercial model	Medium	High	High	n.a.		Mixed
Pure PSB digital model	Low	High	Low	Low	Low	Mixed
Full portfolio	High	High	Low	n.a.	High	Public
"Horses for courses"	Medium	High	High	High	Medium	Mixed
Personalized public service	n.a.	High	Low	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
	Low	Low	Low	n.a.	Low	n.a.

Two of these models are clearly being pushed by opponents of PSB:

- "Attrition model": PSB broadcasters should not be allowed to adopt digital technology, develop new channels or services, or move into the Internet; all of this should be reserved for commercial broadcasters.
- "Distributed public service": Public service programming can be separated from the organisations performing it today. It can be offered by any (commercial) broadcaster, commissioned (and probably financed) to do so by the regulator ¹⁰.

Two other models are being promoted both by opponents of PSB, and by purists opposing its commercialisation:

- "Monastery" model: PSB as a "niche" broadcaster, a complementary service, making available content commercial broadcasters cannot broadcast profitably.
- "Pure PSB digital model": PSB broadcasters are able to launch new digital channels, but with strictly mission-oriented programming.

Three models result from other policy approaches adopted in particular countries:

- "Classical model": Typical PSB analogue broadcasters of today, mixing quality and popular programming on generalist channels.

- “Semi-commercial model”: PSB broadcasters who rely on advertising revenue to such an extent that it affects their programming policy, forcing them to compete for audiences with commercial broadcasters by means of very similar programming.
- “Horses for courses”: Specialised public service broadcasters pursuing different aims (e.g. BBC and Channel 4; or France 2 and France 3).

Finally, there are two models that can be seen as representing an answer to the dilemmas facing PSB broadcasters today and tomorrow:

- “Full portfolio”: The full gamut of universal and specialised broadcast, digital and on-line services, also of a commercial nature (this has the support of DSG and of the EU, see below).
- “Personalized public service”: As audiences move to the interactive, online, on-demand environment, public service broadcasters will need to transform themselves also into providers of individualised public service content.

We should again highlight the eclectic and multi-dimensional nature of most of these models. With the exception of the “monastery model” and “pure PSB digital model” where qualitative content criteria would suffice as an accountability framework, all the others require the development of comprehensive and (partly internally) contradictory sets of criteria. In the “full portfolio” model, for example, different sets of criteria would need to apply to core public-service activities, but quite different ones to additional, non-public service activities of a commercial nature designed mainly to obtain additional revenue to fund core programme activities.

The EU approach: Solution or further complication?

In search of an answer to our dilemmas, let us next consider the EU approach. Complaints against what was regarded as State aid to PSB (Harrison, Woods, 2001), based on the application of Treaty provisions concerning protection of competition to public service broadcasting, forced the EU to develop a view that may offer a solution to the quandary of establishing an accountability framework for PSB.

In an effort to resolve the state aid issue, related to possible violations of Art. 87 of the Treaty, a Protocol to the Amsterdam Treaty on public service broadcasting (known as the Amsterdam Protocol) was adopted in 1997¹¹. This failed to provide sufficiently clear guidance on how the mission of PSB should be understood. After a subsequent “discussion paper” (DGIV, 1998) meant to clarify the EU stand on PSB¹² was rejected by member states, a *Communication on the application of State aid rules to public service broadcasting*

was published (European Commission, 2001a). Meanwhile, a new *Communication on services of general interest* (European Commission, 2000a) and the amended “Transparency Directive” (European Commission, 2000b) were also adopted. These clarify questions related to the financing of services of general economic interest, and broadcasting is defined as such in the EU (see European Court of Justice, 1974). This policy framework allows for separate accounting in such services for public funds (which could be spent only on performing the public service mission so as not to distort competition) versus other, commercial revenue. The Commission later announced that it would intervene in cases where a distortion of competition arising from aid could not be justified with the need to perform the public service (European Commission, 2001b).

All of this creates a two-tier system of accountability. PSB organisations in EU member states are accountable to public authorities, and the member states themselves are accountable to the European Commission for the way they confer, define, organise and finance the public service remit, as well as institute and operate programme and financial accountability systems for PSB broadcasters. That would seem to offer hope that an accountability system could be developed on this basis, providing clear criteria at least as to what constitutes the public service remit of PSB broadcasters in EU countries and how to distinguish it from other programming.

Regrettably that is not the case. After years of internal wrangling and debates (Tongue 1996; European Parliament, 1996, DGIV, 1998; European Commission 1998; Council, 1999; European Commission, 2001; Harrison and Woods, 2001; Coppieters, 2002), the various bodies of the European Union have come to accept a view of PSB which can be summarised as follows: (i) PSB is directly related to the democratic, social and cultural needs of society and media pluralism; (ii) PSB has a comprehensive mission: to offer a wide range of programming in order to address society as a whole, including a suitable balance of entertainment, culture, spectacles and education and has a natural overlap with commercial broadcasting in popular programming: that would include sport, comedy, drama, news and current affairs; (iii) PSB can legitimately seek to reach large audiences; (iv) PSB is important in promoting new audiovisual and information services and new technologies; (v) PSB can legitimately be engaged in both public service and non-public service (commercial) activities. But this fails to clarify what the public service remit really means (see especially item ii).

The *Communication* adopts the same approach. It recognises that a “wide” definition, entrusting a given broadcaster with the task of providing balanced and varied programming in accordance with the remit, may be considered legitimate and that public service duties may be either quantitative or qualitative or both. It also states that “Member States may consider *the whole programming of the broadcasters as covered by the public service remit*” (European Commission, 2001a: 10) [emphasis added – K.J.]. Although it further accepts the premise that PSB broadcasters may be engaged in both public

service and non-public service activities and points to the need for a clear and appropriate separation between them, it fails to offer sufficiently precise criteria by which to do that.

To leave no doubt at all as to what is meant by this, the Commission has stated that “*no objections will be raised as to the nature of the programmes included in the public remit*.” The definition of the public service remit, however, could not extend to activities that could not be *reasonably* considered to meet (in the wording of the Protocol) the “democratic, social and cultural needs of each society” (European Commission, 2001b) [emphases added – K.J.].

Elsewhere, it added that “As regards the definition of the public service in the broadcasting sector, the role of the Commission is limited to checking for manifest error” (European Commission, 2001a: 9). If called upon (e.g. by another complaint filed against a member state), the Commission, as it has announced, would ask with respect to the following three conditions (European Commission, 2001b):

1. The establishment of a clear and precise definition of public service in broadcasting (*whatever its content*) [emphasis added – K.J.];
2. The formal entrustment of the public service mission to one or more undertakings by means of an official act [...];
3. The limitation of public funding to what is necessary for the fulfilment of the public service mission (proportionality).

In light of this discussion it should be abundantly clear that the EU approach offers no solution to our dilemma, but rather represents a further complication¹³ in developing an accountability system for public service broadcasting. One could even say it is irrelevant from this point of view because the goal is actually to solve a particularly troublesome problem involved in protecting competition and the operation of the internal market. The fact that this concerns PSB is merely coincidental. Each member state may define and organise the public service remit differently, and thereby create a different accountability system for its PSB broadcasters.

Disaggregate public service broadcasting

Thus, no universally accepted definition of PSB has been – or indeed can be – developed because no clear-cut and homogeneous set of criteria can be applied. This is an inescapable conclusion given that it comprises such a wide variety of different activities.

Meanwhile, politically-motivated decisions are being taken under pressure from commercial broadcasters, interested in marginalizing PSB and

weakening it as a market competitor. They seek to impose accountability systems based on some combination of "attrition" and "monastery" models¹⁴. If PSB broadcasters are forced to accommodate themselves to such criteria for assessing their performance, contemporary efforts to evolve in ways required by contemporary technological and market trends would obviously be severely hampered.

It's inarguable that the concept of public service broadcasting is urgently in need of modernisation and adjustment in light of contemporary realities (see Jakubowicz, 2002). Concepts originating from the time of broadcasting scarcity in national markets are no longer adequate or convincing today in a global broadcasting ecology with changed market and societal conditions. In addition to "classical" core activities dedicated to the public service remit and mixing distinctiveness with the need to maintain audience share, it is likely that large PSB organisations will develop commercial and semi-commercial activities. Some are doing that already (a good example is BBC Worldwide which is aggressively commercial and involved in operating commercial television channels in various parts of the world). So performance assessment criteria and accountability systems will have to be different in each case. The same is true for new forms of content delivery encompassing both thematic channels and online services that are amenable to individualisation and personalised content.

The answer would therefore seem to be that PSB broadcasters themselves should – as they no doubt do – adopt different evaluation criteria for their different activities, and that regulators and state bodies need to accept the principle of different accountability systems tailored to the specific nature of each of these types of activities. Table 2 can only begin to suggest ways of developing such systems.

Table 2. Different performance measures for different PSB activities

AREAS	PSB PERFORMANCE MEASURES	
	Core public-service activities	Additional, revenue-generating non-public service activities
Programming	PSB content (genres+quality+diversity)	Market attractiveness
Finances	Cost-effectiveness, productivity	Revenue growth, results, profit, fair trading principles (no cross-subsidies from public funds)
Audience	Audience satisfaction and approval, value of time spent, PSB seen as needed and as providing value for (licence-fee) money	Market share and audience composition suitable for advertising and marketing purposes
Technology	Presence on all significant platforms	Active use of all appropriate platforms to boost profit and market share

Although admittedly crude, this frames a beginning for developing dedicated performance measures and accountability systems for different types of PSB activities. The crucial point is to accept the principle because our discussion makes it crystal clear that the traditional approach can no longer work. So what are the recommended steps for proceeding if the principle is accepted?

PSB organisations, regulatory bodies and the public need first to agree on a model of public service broadcasting to be applied in the particular country, or to clearly define the existing model (and its component parts) if there is agreement that it should continue. The next step is to develop an accountability system corresponding to that model and also able to accommodate expected future developments and change in the PSB system. An "accountability mismatch" – e.g. performance measures or criteria in keeping with the monastery model applied to a semi-commercial model existing in reality, or vice versa – would be counterproductive and destructive for the PSB organisation.

If these steps are taken the commercial broadcasters will have actually rendered an invaluable service in prompting public debate concerning PSB, leading in each country (separately) to some resolution accepted by the majority. PSB exists by the will of parliament and the public. Acceptance of its existence and approval of its performance are vital for its continued operation. That in turn depends on clear recognition of the service required from it. Any progress towards that goal will be a foundation for its continued ability to perform those services.

Notes

1. A *Discussion paper on the "Television without Frontiers" (TWF) Directive* (12934/02 MH/ms 1) presented at a meeting of the Council of the European Union (Education, Youth and Culture) in Brussels on 11 October 2002, put it this way: "There is reason to suppose that [future] regulatory measures will be less detailed and be characterised by co-regulation and self-regulation rather than traditional TV regulation, among other things because of the difficulties in enforcing the rules. On the other hand, there are strong indications that traditional TV will continue to be the most widely used medium for delivering content in the foreseeable future. This speaks in favour, to a certain extent, of maintaining a distinction between regulation of different audiovisual services, so that the degree of regulation depends on the degree of choice and control of users.
2. They do so in keeping with the spirit of the times: "The core of the contract can remain. The state offers certain privileges to some channels, and *in return* each channel provides something of worth beyond that which the market alone would provide. The BBC is the most privileged ... *In return* the nation has on the whole been well-served." (Jowell, 2002; emphases added. See also Thomas, 1999) Also the French "Loi relative à la liberté de communication", amended in 2000, provides for "contrats d'objectifs et de moyens" to be concluded between the State and each of the PSB institutions.
3. Born (2002) lists a number of those applying to the BBC, including Parliamentary review at Charter renewal, regular review and reports by parliamentary Culture Select Committees, government appointment of Governors; review of licence fee level and therefore budget; approval of new services, e.g. digital ones; Annual Report and Accounts to Parliament; National Broadcasting & Advisory Councils; content oversight by the Broadcast-

- ing Standards Commission; annual external financial audits by KPMG; oversight by Office of Fair Trading; European law on competition issues, etc.),
4. A proposal for such a system was formulated some time ago by National Economic Research Associates (NERA, 1991: 1) which, in a language foreshadowing contemporary usage, suggested that "there may be real advantages in specifying a detailed contract between government (on behalf of viewers) and the public service broadcaster". Among other things, it provided an example of the areas such "service contracts" might cover: minimum amounts of different types of programming (e.g. hours per week of news, current affairs, drama, documentaries, children's programmes); minimum amounts of locally produced programmes; catering for the interests of minority groups; universal signal transmission of a specified quality; prime time scheduling requirements; impartial coverage of news and current affairs; a minimum amount of local and regional programming; language requirements. According to the NERA proposal, contracts might also include: requirements for distribution of budgets between different broad categories of programmes; more detailed specification of the nature and quality of certain important types of programmes (e.g. resources to be devoted to worldwide news coverage); requirement to achieve a certain share of the total viewing audience (perhaps measured as an average over the year).
 5. Of course, even internally-oriented self-regulation can serve as an external accountability instrument (e.g. the CBC rolling corporate plans under such titles as "Our Commitment to Canadians").
 6. Some PSB organizations, like the BBC, do try to establish mechanisms of direct accountability to the audience, but the rhetoric of the instrument used for this purpose, "Statement of Promises", has been described as being of "placatory, placebo" nature, and the whole exercise – as a "simulation of openness" (Born, 2002).
 7. Such as "Develop programming strategies to reach those groups identified above as low users of SBS services, while at the same time maintaining existing audiences"; "Produce and broadcast more programming that originates in Australia and which reflects Australian experiences"; "Foster an environment where creativity is valued and risk-taking is accepted" and "Maintain SBS 's position as the premier provider of diverse, informative and entertaining programming in different languages and from different cultures".
 8. In its comments on the draft Communications Bill, the Independent Television Commission (2002) points out the deficiencies of the proposed system, which could potentially lead to even greater interventionism. In a fast-moving market, it says, the triennial report could be three years (and given that the lead time for programme commissioning is up to two years – even five years) out of date, and may not provide relevant guidance as to the current range and quality of available programmes, let alone lead to any effective remedial action. "The ITC is further concerned that an ineffective triennial review system would create pressures and frustrations which would come to a head around each review. This would put pressure on government to intervene and change the channels' public service remits, creating business uncertainty and an unsatisfactory alternation between self-regulation and government intervention. The ITC believes a more effective but lighter touch regime could be delivered on the basis of OFCOM's Annual Report to Parliament, including a brief high level analysis of the output of public service licensees in the context of the market as a whole".
 9. The UK Independent Review Panel, appointed to consider the future of the BBC, were quite honest about the difficulties of establishing a new definition of PSB: "We have not managed anything so ambitious in the six months we have had at our disposal. When we each tried to define public service broadcasting, some very familiar words started to appear – information, education, extension of horizons, impartiality, independence, universal access, inclusivity, service of minorities, lack of commercial motivation, etc., etc. We decided that we may not be able to offer a tight new definition of public service broadcasting, but we nevertheless each felt that we knew it when we saw it" (*The Future Funding of the BBC ... 1999*: 10). The Panel also added that their goal was to "fund the

- minimum level of BBC output which is needed to maintain a critical mass of public service broadcasting in the changing marketplace", but that "defining that minimum is no easy task. It is more of an art than a science" (*The Future Funding of the BBC ...* 1999: 9).
10. The "distributed public service model" – if it were to be applied, though this does not seem likely in the foreseeable future – would eliminate the problem of accountability altogether, as there would be no public service broadcasting organizations and commercial broadcasters commissioned to offer PSB content would be bound by obligations clearly defined in a real contract with the authority delegated to administer the system.
 11. It recognised 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", and said that "The provisions of the Treaty establishing the European Community shall be without prejudice to the competence of Member States to provide for the funding of public service broadcasting and insofar as such funding is granted to broadcasting organisations for the fulfilment of the public service remit as conferred, defined and organised by each Member State, and insofar as such funding does not affect trading conditions and competition in the Community to an extent which would be contrary to the common interest, while the realisation of the remit of that public service shall be taken into account".
 12. It argued that practically nothing but information, educational and cultural programming, as well as programmes with regional scope and/or directed to social and ethnic minorities, should be accepted as a legitimate part of the public service remit in terms of content. Hence, the PSB mission could be expressed in terms of the share of such genres in total transmission time and in quotas of how much of each genre there should be. That approach was echoed in June 2002 by the British Conservative Party's proposal that a reduced licence fee be retained only for a narrowly-defined public service broadcasting element, excluding most sport, entertainment and drama. See discussion of the "monastery" model of PSB below.
 13. An additional level of complications is created by decisions of the European Court of Justice. In the 2001 *Preussen Elektra* decision, the Court held that "only advantages granted directly or indirectly through State resources are to be considered aid within the meaning of Article 92(1)". Thus, if public funding available to a public service broadcaster does not come from State resources (e.g. if licence fees are paid directly to the broadcaster), without the intermediary of the A week after the publication of the 2001 *Communication*, the Court handed down a decision in the *Ferring SA* case, in which it holds that only advantages which exceed the necessary cost for ensuring the public service obligation constitute State aid. Thus, many countries where public broadcasters rely on advertising revenue to cover the full cost of operations would be exempt from the principles laid down in the *Communication*, because those broadcasters do not benefit from State aid at all. Therefore, the accountability system created by the Commission would not apply to them at all.
 14. One example of this is provided by a development in Germany. In 2001, ARD announced – in the best "full portfolio" fashion – a strategy to turn the web into a third pillar alongside its traditional radio and television services, so as to be able to serve as an information hub and "trusted guide" for internet surfers. This year, KEF, the organization overseeing the licence fee system, said – in line with the "attrition model" – that public broadcasters should restrict their ambitions in the online sector to support their TV and radio programs and not spend viewer's money to provide additional services (Stegers, 2002). Clearly, KEF does not believe in the personalized public service model.

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From Ritual to Reality
Public Broadcasters and
Social Responsibility in the Netherlands

Jo Bardoel & Kees Brants

While the public is partly turning its back on them, public service broadcasters in Western Europe still claim state support and preferential treatment to realise their obligations towards society. Public broadcasters continue to see themselves as the principal guarantors of quality, diversity and, in the end, democracy itself. Whereas private stations are construed as only being in the business of making money, PSB's claim to live by a cultural-pedagogic logic: where the former are entertaining the public, they are concerned with their well being; while PSB is the embodiment of the Enlightenment ideal, the commercial stations are the doorway to the practice of a dumbing-down culture. In their defence, the private stations claim to be the 'real public channels' because they presumably know and give what the public wants. Their services are more truly in the public interest.

Although partly the rhetoric of the new competitive environment in which the two 'adversaries' smear one another while polishing their own performance to such a shine it is all but blinding, the history and characteristics of public broadcasting are indeed paved with a sense of social responsibility and responsiveness. Because their monopoly status allowed them to take many things for granted, it was often considered self evident that their *raison d'être* was built on obligations towards society in which information, quality, cultural enrichment and independence from state and commerce were the central ingredients. In claiming the mantle of social responsibility, they took account of and were accountable to the public. In practice, however, it was through political or administrative institutions that the latter took place and, as for the former, they were often unresponsive.

The way in and extent to which social responsibility notions are elaborated in theory and practice tend to vary from country to country and from period to period. Even the vocabulary of the discourse differs according to time and place. Where the notion of 'social responsibility' is very much an Anglo-Saxon invention (McQuail, 1994: 123), in German-speaking countries the concept of the 'public sphere' is more common. The popularity of Habermas' work has made this terminology more popular in – critical – Anglo-

American discourse in the last decade, too (see Calhoun, 1992; Garnham, 1993; Thompson, 1995; Nordenstreng, 1997a).

Since the mid-1980s this self-evident claim for public broadcasters' legitimisation has been challenged by changing political beliefs and the introduction of commercial television in Western Europe. Liberalisation and deregulation have created an atmosphere in which more and more citizens themselves hold these organisations directly responsible for their performance, regardless of public or private status. At the same time, social ethics are shifting towards more volatile and negotiable norms (the Shell and Brent Spar cases have been pivotal here), and the claim of public broadcasters to be the principal guardian of the public interest is challenged (Brants, 1999). Social responsibility thus tends to develop from a relevant policy issue to an asset for both public and private broadcasting organisations in the new context of competition and convergence.

In this new media environment in Europe, public broadcasters rethink and often rediscover their social responsibility towards society; if only because (supra-) national policy makers are requiring them to do so. On the basis of a content analysis of policy documents of the public broadcasting organisations in the Netherlands over a period of 40 years, we trace how they have (re)defined this, and in particular their role in relation to 1) the public interest, to 2) providing diverse, reliable and quality information, and to 3) minorities in a changing society. We thereby hope to shed light on the ways in which public broadcasters come to terms with the more market-oriented attitudes of subsequent governments, how they 'translate' new regulatory frameworks into programme policies, and in what ways they negotiate and articulate their new role *vis à vis* revised government policies.

In studying 40 years of policy in public broadcasting in the Netherlands, we can illustrate how such organisations have (re)defined their normative duty in light of their still preferential financial position. This work reflects a specific stage in a wider research on the question as to whether public service broadcasters can still rightfully claim a monopoly on a quality inspired cultural-pedagogic logic, or whether commercial channels (can) also perform in a socially responsible way? It is obvious that these questions are crucial for public broadcasters in a changing media landscape. In a previous study, we looked at the Dutch government's changing broadcasting policy over the years (Bardoel et al. 2000); the next step will be a similar research into the programme policies of the private stations.¹

Researching a diffuse concept

In spite of claims and counter claims, both the meaning and context of the notion of 'social responsibility' [SR] are fairly ambiguous. We notice at least three different meanings. First, SR notions sometimes refer to *content*. In that

sense, information is not merely a commodity but also a social or 'merit' good that should be accurate, diverse and of high quality (e.g. Broadcasting Research Unit 1985; Picard 1989). A second notion of responsibility refers to the media's function for (democratic) *society*: apart from an economic role, media have political and cultural functions, allowing sufficient forums for the expression of opinions and enabling the public to fulfil its role as citizens (e.g. Van Cuilenburg & Slaa 1993; Dahlgren 1995). Finally, social responsibility refers to the *organisational status* of the broadcasters: media ownership is a public trust in which the content producers should be independent from both state and market forces, but still accountable to the public to avoid power without responsibility (e.g. Blumler & Hoffmann-Riem 1992; Siune & Hultén 1998).

Though responsibility (as obligation to the public) is often used interchangeably and confusingly with 'responsiveness' (as taking account of the public), it is clearly a normative notion linked to 'the public interest'. It is grounded in a belief in the makeability of society, the changeability of human nature and the establishment of the ideals of Enlightenment. It assumes that broadcast media are instrumental to social orientations of citizens and to social cohesion in society. The state, as the responsible agent for public policy, is often seen as, in the end, benevolent and acting in the public interest. At least, that is the dominant belief in a consensual democracy like the Netherlands (but probably less so in adversarial democracies such as the UK or the US).

The ambiguity of the concept can probably be explained by it being rooted in communication practice and policy rather than theory (Hellman 1999: 58). The most relevant documents do not stem from academic research but from policy advisory commissions like the Hutchins commission in the US (1947) and the British Royal Commission on the Press (1977). Consequently, the concept tends to be practical, oriented towards problem solving and, because of its political nature, contested and negotiable. As a result, the definitions differ from country to country and clearly reflect national media policies (cf. McQuail 1992). Its origin lies in policies for a traditionally market-driven press whose apparently 'irresponsible' behaviour needed (self)regulation. In a situation of channel scarcity for analogue broadcasting, where government interference was considered inevitable, legitimisation for a public policy was not really necessary.

Since the 1970s, however, interfering in public broadcasting and giving the organisations financial prerogatives and specific roles 'in the public interest' increasingly required legitimacy. Initially it took a more ritualistic form: the public monopoly was not seriously contested although an open government had to legitimise its prescriptive regulations. With the introduction of commercial television in the Netherlands and the changed policy environment premised on the EC Directive *Television without Frontiers*, both conspicuously introduced in 1989, interference and preferential treatment demanded a more deliberate strategic policy and legitimacy. While old pater-

nalistic imperatives were no longer taken for granted, the preferred position of the public broadcasters put them under an obligation. Their role and duty had to be stipulated and their social responsibility operationalised. At the same time, being socially responsible became an asset in the discursive struggle between public and private broadcasters.

Methods

But how to trace a concept that in its origin was mostly implicit and thus possibly invisible in documents? We follow a more or less inductive approach by, first, reconstructing the evolution of the concept as it can be traced in the policy documents of the public broadcasters and, second, by comparing this with the development we found with government policies. We use the concept in a sensitising way, open and ill-defined at the beginning of the research, serving as a general guideline for analysing the policy documents, and then gradually elaborating empirically based content (Blumer 1969).

Following this grounded theory approach, the first phase is *explorative*, composing a comprehensive list of social responsibility (SR) norms stemming from academic research and various policy notions. As we followed the same procedure when analysing government policy in an earlier phase of this research project, we already had made up a list of keywords to find notions of SR-norms in policy documents of the public broadcasters. These keywords originated from literature that gave an overview of SR-notions in other countries (e.g. McQuail, 1992; Mitchell & Blumler, 1994; McQuail, 1998). The list was a first tool to bridge the gap between abstract SR-theories and the more concrete and practical notions found in selected policy documents. Armed with this list, the content of the selected documents was analysed for the appearance of notions related to social responsibility.

Every 'text on paper' was transformed into a digital document to be able to trace all the social responsibility norms more easily (via the *word count* function in MS Word). Each of the SR-terms found in the text was highlighted if the context proved to be relevant, and then counted in a Microsoft Excel table. On the basis of the word count, a table was created for three chronological periods with the absolute frequency values of all the SR-norms detected in the policy documents. Subsequently, these values were situated in the three-category schema we defined earlier: media content requirements, role of media in/for society and organisational status.

In the second *reflective* phase of research, the various concepts were linked to a more comprehensive background by categorising the complete list of SR-norms in order to position them within a theoretical framework and to search for general tendencies in the development of social responsibility in the policies of the broadcasting organisations. In the final *interpretative* phase, the use of social responsibility norms in the relevant documents was ana-

lysed and interpreted as to their saliency, their range and diversity, and to excavate potential shifts in emphasis and discourse over time. This was then compared to the changing norms and categories that we found in analysing the government's policy documents.

The case of the Netherlands

Compared to its beginning in the 1950s, the TV broadcasting system in the Netherlands has undergone dramatic organisational changes. In that light, we can subdivide the time span of our research project (1960-2000) into three, subsequent chronological periods: the *old public order* (1960-1980), the *transitional period* (1980-1990) and the *new dual order* (1990-2000).

During the old public order, society was characterised by religious and ideological *pillars*, more or less homogenous societal streams that structured the social order from cradle to grave, and from political party to media and voluntary organisations. Up into the 1960s the broadcasting system reflected and reinforced the existing social and political order, with journalists performing a platform function for the elites of the different pillars, informing the rank and file as well as creating consensus and stability (Brants & McQuail 1997, Bardoel 1997). The organisation of the broadcasting system in this period (1955-1980) is characterised by non-commercialism, representation of the *pillarised* structure and – from the end of the 1960s and marked by the 1967 Broadcasting Act – controlled access for new broadcasting institutions. The organisations' most relevant policy documents studied for this period are two memoranda, one on a proposed *Law on Broadcasting Regulation* (1966) and one on the *Principles for a Joint Programme* (1969).

The second, transitional period (1980-1990) is characterised best as a time of defence, preserving and protecting the public monopoly of the existing broadcasting system. Following the rapid development of new transmission technologies in an already heavily cabled country, the first cracks in the system became visible. The combination of satellite and cable, and the possibilities this opened (although still refused) to national private investors, could no longer hold off foreign commercial institutions. Satellite broadcasters, for example, were not hindered by any necessity to comply with national regulations. The government responded with a White Paper (1983) and a new Media Act (1987), designed to maintain the existing system. The broadcasting organisations' most relevant policy documents studied for this period are the *Comments on the Government's Media Memorandum* (1984) and a memorandum on *Future Policy for Dutch Broadcasting* (1989).

At the end of the 1980s and in the early 1990s a new dual order was formed in which commercial broadcasters were admitted to the delicately balanced Dutch system. The number of national television channels rose from 2 in 1987 to more than 10 at the turn of the century, only 3 of which were pub-

lic. With the audience fragmenting over the different channels, the audience share of the public channels dropped considerably from approximately 80 percent in 1988 to just under 40 percent in 2000. The government papers and acts reflect the changing situation and no longer staunchly defend the public system per se. The three most relevant memoranda of the public broadcasters studied for this period are all answers to the future public broadcasting order in a changed media environment: a *Differentiated Order* (1991), *The Power of Pluralism* (1996) and *Making a Difference* (2000).

Government policy

Our research on the government's policies concluded that, at first glance, the general policy principles originating from the old public order have not changed dramatically over time. However, in these three periods we also noticed three concurrent tendencies (Bardoel et al. 2000: 95ff). First, there was an increase in the *diversity* of SR-norms used in the various policy documents. A growing awareness of the importance of national programme production indicates an increase in the concern for national identity. There is also growing attention to the exchange of European culture, for the quality of programming and for the independence of the broadcasting system from governmental and economic influences. In addition, different social groups cutting across traditional segments, including minority groups, the elderly and the unemployed, are being addressed separately.

The second noticeable tendency was the growing *refinement* of SR-norm specifications. An indication for this development is the quantification of requirements concerning programme comprehensiveness, which was realised through the designation of quotas for several programming categories. This increasing norm refinement is also indicated by the allocation of specific amounts of airtime to nationally produced programmes. Finally, with the coming of the new dual order, the government papers showed a further increase and refinement of the social responsibility concept in light of social (*individualisation*) and economic (*competition*) changes affecting public broadcasting. There is clearly more attention to the audience-as-consumers, and programmes should thus not only have quality but also attractiveness. In interpreting these changes we detected four general tendencies and shifts.

- *From political to cultural motives.* The analysis of Dutch broadcasting policy legitimisation revealed a shift from predominantly political motives (related to basic values as communication freedom and democracy) towards mainly cultural motives (related to preserving national culture and identity). In the old public order, the main reason for government regulation was premised on a fair division of the scarce frequency spectrum between the traditional 'streams' segmenting Dutch

society. When in the 1960s the cohesion within the traditional pillars started eroding and new societal groups appeared, the government was pressured to grant these 'new segments' equal representation within the broadcasting system. During the transitional period, the political motives mentioned above remained an important part of policy legitimisation, but cultural motives also appeared in policy documents. There was more attention to cultural production and greater concern for choice, authenticity, creativity and quality of programming. With the arrival of commercial broadcasting in the new dual order, the legitimisation of broadcasting policy shifted more towards cultural motives.

- *From collectivism to individualism.* Our research showed that Dutch broadcasting policy in the new dual order tends to be primarily individualist and citizen-centred, while in previous periods it was more collectivist and state-oriented. In the old public order the Dutch broadcasting system was organised along the lines of social segmentation. Most issues regarding social responsibility were approached in a collectivist manner and applied particularly to broadcasting institutions. In the transitional period new social groups, distinguished by age, ethnic origin and life-style, fuelled the need for a more individualistic policy approach. The liberalisation process in the beginning of the new dual order-period induced another individualist policy approach: citizen and consumer protection. After the admittance of commercial broadcasters, there was great concern for access of citizens to the entire broadcasting system, and the maintenance of pluralist and independent programming for an increasingly diversifying society. Through more audience research and greater obligations regarding the responsiveness to its results, the answerability of the broadcasting institutions towards citizens increased.
- *From ambiguous to positive assessment of economic forces.* The influence of economic and market forces on the broadcasting system has been estimated differently for many aspects and across time. Some economic forces were assessed positively even in the old public order, but others more negatively, and again other forces were gradually considered less harmful to the broadcasting system. In each relevant policy document of the last three decades, the free market was considered an insufficient tool to guarantee the various policy goals regarding social responsibility of the broadcasting system. But the liberalisation of the media sector and the creation of the new dual order in the third period suggest an increasing confidence in economic and market forces. The market mechanism is by now considered to induce a more efficient use of resources and an expansion of choice. At the same time, however, many policy documents stress the importance of consumer protection from market failure.

- *From purely national to also minority cultures.* The attention to minority groups and different cultures in Dutch government policy has increased significantly since the 1960s. Whereas minorities were not (or only scarcely) mentioned during the old public order, minority groups have by now become a considerable element in Dutch broadcasting policy. That may sound like a paradox because the pillars themselves were the organisational structures for the emancipation of religious (particularly Catholic) and ideological (notably socialist) groups. But as these started to erode, the diversity of new societal groups, segmented along lines other than religion and class, increased. Because of the growing number of citizens of foreign origin, non-traditional cultures received more attention. Also, through the expansion of daytime broadcasts, the unemployed and elderly were catered for. It was also felt that the public system had to be more attractive to the young who seemed to be more interested in commercial than in public channels.

These tendencies demonstrate that the overall awareness of social responsibility, as reflected in the broadcasting policies of subsequent Dutch governments, has increased over time. It reflects both the increasing (discursive) struggle over public broadcasting in a dual and competitive system and the more critical stance of citizens and society towards the performance of social institutions and organisations in general. The shift towards cultural motives in broadcast policies seems a reaction to trends in the influx of cross-border television, the need to reposition public broadcasting *vis-à-vis* commercial broadcasting and, last but not least, a changing social composition of society. In a sense, it seems that in broadcast policies the old, modernist paradigm – with freedom and equality as the core values – is being replaced by a more postmodernist approach. There is more room for individual cultures, styles, and tastes and less for paternalistic policies, at least in a rhetorical sense. More generally, our impression is that the specificities of Dutch broadcasting policies and their legitimisation erode and are being replaced by more common, perhaps ‘European’ policy motives.

But to what extent do we see these changes in government policies reflected in policy documents of public broadcasters? Or do the public broadcasters instead negotiate and articulate their own discourse and problem definitions?

The PSB remit

Relying on the research method explained earlier, we wanted to picture the development of social responsibility in the policy documents of public broadcasters: what keywords, possible synonyms and related operationalisations do we see, and how has their saliency changed over time (see Table 1)? We notice here a number of developments.

Table 1. SR norms 1960-2000

	I	II	III
SR-Norms			
Access to audience (3) <i>access to citizens</i>	•	•	•
Representativity (organizational)	•	•	•
Forum / communication between groups	•		•
Public responsibility	•	•	•
Comprehensive programming	•	•	•
public interest	•	•	
Religion	•	•	•
independence (government)	•	•	•
local/regional identity	•	•	•
Diversity (quality) <i>public responsibility</i>	•	•	•
News	•	•	•
Education	•	•	•
National identity	•	•	•
Autonomy	•	•	•
Availability	•	•	•
Entertainment	•	•	•
Balance (programming)	•	•	•
Culture	•	•	•
Diversity (quality) <i>programme supply</i>	•	•	•
Representativity	•		•
Information	•	•	•
public sphere	•	•	•
Art	•	•	•
Transparency	•	•	•
Freedom of speech	•	•	•
Objectivity (programming)	•	•	•
Security (state)	•		•
Continuity	•		
Non discrimination	•		
public order	•		
Minority groups/ sub cultural groups	•	•	•
Politics	•	•	•
Access to audience (2) <i>access to media</i>	•	•	•
right of reply	•	•	
Equality (programming)	•	•	•
Democracy	•	•	•
Opinion	•		•
Authenticity	•		•
Integrity	•		•
objectiveness (access to audience)	•		
public evaluation		•	•
Quality		•	•
Reach		•	
audience maximization		•	•
representation of audience interests		•	
audience optimization		•	•
audience preferences		•	•
Attractiveness		•	•
Objectivity (content)		•	•

Table 1. Cont.

	I	II	III
Communication within groups/Social Cohesion		•	•
Craftmanship		•	•
Non-commercial programming		•	•
access to audience (2) access to citizens		•	•
Independence (econ. forces)		•	•
access to knowledge		•	•
social values		•	•
accountability (3)		•	•
access to audience (1) access to citizens		•	•
policy consistency		•	
Ideology		•	•
Access to audience (1) <i>access to media</i>		•	•
Creativity		•	•
balance (public vs. commercial)		•	
Choice			•
Reliability			•
Privacy			•
information selection			•
Innovation			•
accountability (4)			•
Accuracy			•
decency			•
information processing			•
accountability (2)			•
Comprehensibility			•
openness (access to audience)			•
responsible programming			•
Truth			•
accountability (1)			•
cultural integration			•
equality (access of audience) <i>access to media</i>			•
Factuality			•
fairness (access to audience)			•
Fairness (content)			•
universal service (access of audience)			•

Firstly, there is an increase of social responsibility notions: from 40 in the old public order (period I), via 53 in the transition period (II), to 74 under the new dual order (period III). Even if we take into account that in the same period the size of policy documents increased as well, the growth in diversity is significant (see also Table 2 – *in appendix* – which gives the numerical importance of the norms). This stronger elaboration and explicitness of these norms by the public broadcasters over time can be interpreted as a growing awareness of their social responsibility role.

Secondly, we see that certain notions remain present over time, while others disappear or, in some instances, reappear. Several traditional roles that media are expected to play for individuals in society – information, educa-

tion, entertainment – are present in all three periods. So are the content requirements (comprehensive programming, diversity, balance, independence, culture, art, objectivity, equality) which form not only the most elaborate list, but also reflect the anxiety we find in politics over the potential ideological power of the medium. Certain social goals to be reached (transparency, freedom of speech and, more generally, democracy) and social sectors that should recognise themselves in the programming (access, forum, religion, identity, minority groups) are also constant over time.

What disappear are notions like public order and continuity or (only in the transition period) representation, security, opinion, authenticity, integrity. This can either be a question of the self-evident nature of the notion or, instead, as the declining importance of the notion in a society that becomes more volatile and depillarised. New since the transition period are notions which reflect a mixture of responsiveness to audiences (public evaluation, preferences, accountability, access), awareness of new competition (attractiveness, quality, reach, audience maximisation) and emphasising the importance and quality of their existing functions (social cohesion, craftsmanship, non-commerciality, independence, creativity). Typical is the statement in the memorandum *The Power of Pluralism* that:

It is self evident that both public and commercial broadcasters have an influence and a function in society. However, there are several reasons that the social function of public broadcasting should be fulfilled by public radio and television.

The reasons being its guarantee for (quoted):

- Reliable, independent, journalistically and professionally assembled and selected information;
- The provision of all programme types and constant quality;
- Functioning as an anchor for social identity, cultural unity and individuality;
- And being anchored in society.

The new dual order specifies new content requirements (accuracy, truth, factuality, fairness) and also new worries (privacy, innovation, decency, responsible programming, cultural integration). Decency seems especially remarkable in a country most deeply impacted by the so-called sexual revolution; in the governmental policy documents this notion disappeared conspicuously with the old public order.

Finally, we take a closer look at the three categories distinguished before to see whether we can refine the trends and the saliency detected (see table 3). The distinction between social responsibility referring to *content*, *media's role for society* or the *organisational status* of the broadcasters was applied

to the different norms found in the total summary. Because all policy documents are different in size, the table aggregates the total of relative values for each of the three periods.

Table 3. Saliency of SR-norms 1960-2000

SR-NORMS (in %)	Old public order (I)	Transition period (II)	New dual order (III)
Words total	14 548	31 623	61 172
SR-norms total	353	650	2 090
SR-norm density (%)	2,43 %	2,06 %	3,42 %
SR density, media content (%)	0,21 %	0,19 %	0,69 %
SR density, role for society (%)	0,87 %	1,06 %	2,24 %
SR density, organizations (%)	1,35 %	0,80 %	0,48 %
Attention to media content (%)	8,50 %	9,39 %	20,33 %
Attention role for society (%)	35,98 %	51,69 %	65,60 %
Attention to organizations (%)	55,52 %	38,92 %	14,07 %
Paragraph total	342	841	2 534
Line total	1 318	3 745	6 615
Average of SR-norms per paragraph	1,03	0,77	0,82
Average of SR-norms per line	0,27	0,17	0,32

Explanation: Words total: total of words found in the document according to word count function in Microsoft Word. SR-norms total: total of SR-norms found in the document. SR-norm density (%): proportion between total of SR-norms and total of word. SR density, media content (%): proportion between total of SR-norms found within the category Media content requirements and total of words. SR density, society role (%): proportion between total of SR-norms found within the category The role of media in/for society and total of word. SR density, organizations (%): proportion between total of SR-norms found within the category Organizational status and total of words. Attention to media content (%): proportion between total of SR-norms found within the category Media content requirements and total of SR-norms. Attention to society role (%): proportion between total of SR-norms found within the category The role of media in/for society and total of SR-norms. Attention to organizations (%): proportion between total of SR-norms found within the category Organizational status and total of SR-norms. Paragraph total: total of paragraphs in the document according to word count function in Microsoft Word. Line total: total of lines in the document according to word count function in Microsoft Word. Average of SR-norms per paragraph: proportion between total of SR-norms and total of paragraphs. Average of SR-norms per line: proportion between total of SR norms and total of lines.

The table clearly shows that during the most recent new dual order the SR-norm density (the norms as a percentage of the total number of words) in policy documents is much higher than during the transitional period or in the old public order. It is remarkable, however, that the SR-norm density during the old public order was actually higher than in the transitional period. This might have been caused by the strong liberalization and so-called 'no nonsense' policies of the 1980s.

Focusing next on each category (concentration on content, society or organization), it is interesting to note an increase of attention (the relative percentage of each of the norms) for both *media content* and *role for society*

at the expense of *organizations*. In all three periods the norms focusing on the role of the broadcaster for society dominate (from 36 percent in the old public order to 66 percent in the new dual order). For the content requirements, with the exception of equality in programming and diversity (quality), the norms only come up after the first period, which seems surprising if one considers 'content' to lie at the heart of the public function of broadcasting. But this rather typifies the Netherlands, where the structure of external pluralism is considered to be enough to guarantee quality of programme content.

Discussion: Competition and legitimation

The first conclusion of this research is that the number, variety and frequency of social responsibility norms in policy documents of Dutch public broadcasters increased dramatically over time. Most SR-requirements simply did not exist in the old public order. They were introduced in the transitional period to become (only very recently) part and parcel of the new dual order. This clearly indicates that the legitimization of public broadcasters has become more overt, explicit and elaborate over time. The sheer increase in the length of policy documents underscores this, and seems a reflection of the development of the public broadcasting system from a more introverted attitude in a situation of monopoly to a more extroverted approach in the most recent period. Public broadcasters had to come out.

Comparing the vocabulary of the policy discourses of the government and that of public broadcasters, it becomes evident that both use very much the same language in their discourse. Only a few SR-norms (like interesting content, hierarchy/public responsibility, self-regulation/independence and equality/access to audience) are used only in government documents and not in broadcasters documents.

The same can be said when we look at the three general characteristics. There is a decline in attention paid to *organizational status* and growing emphasis on *media content* and *media's role for society* in both governmental and broadcasters documents. However, even in the new dual order the government's attention to organizational responsibility norms still form more than 50 percent of all norms mentioned in their policy documents (see Table 4). This finding can be explained by the role Dutch governments must play in regulating a highly complex and decentralized public broadcasting system.

The number of references to the institutional requirements and arrangements that organized the external pluralism of the 'pillarised' public broadcasting system in the Netherlands did decrease, however, in the recent period in both governmental and broadcasting documents. It is another indication of a shift from an internal to an external orientation of public broad-

Table 4. Saliency of SR-norms in governmental documents

	Old public order (I)	Transition period (II)	New dual order (III)
Words total	30 413	50 579	90 826
SR-norms total	544	758	1 656
SR-norm density (%)	1,79 %	1,50 %	1,82 %
SR density, media content (%)	0,07 %	0,08 %	0,25 %
SR density, role for society (%)	0,45 %	0,48 %	0,64 %
SR density, organizations (%)	1,27 %	0,94 %	0,93 %
Attention to media content (%)	3,68 %	5,41 %	13,65 %
Attention to role for society (%)	25,37 %	32,19 %	35,27 %
Attention to organizations (%)	70,96 %	62,40 %	51,09 %
Paragraph total	794	1 505	2 794
Line total	2 374	4 994	7 982
Average of SR-norms per paragraph	0,69	0,5	0,59
Average of SR-norms per line	0,23	0,15	0,21

casters, and of more attention for media performance in terms of content or output. It seems they are eager to follow the policy trends, especially in the most recent period. The legitimacy for (non-) policing seems to follow the same pattern: from an implicit and more ritualistic stance to a strategic function for policy. This trend is also reflected in the format and content of the documents over time. They change from purely reactive *vis-à-vis* government policies in the first period to a much more pro-active approach in the last period. On the basis of this, a more specific periodisation of the characteristics of social responsibility in governmental and broadcasting organizations' policy can be elaborated (see Table 5). To be sure about this, however, more qualitative and contextual research is needed.

Table 5. Periodisation of social responsibility in broadcasting policy

	Old public order 1960-1980	Transition period 1980-1990	New dual order 1990-2000
Number of SR-norms	40	53	74
SR-norm density (%)	2.43	2.06	3.42
Government policy emphasis	Organisation	Organisation	Organisation/ Role for society
Broadcasters policy emphasis	Organisation	Role for society, Organisation	Role for society, Content
Policy legitimacy	Implicit, internal, reactive	Ritualistic, external, reactive	Strategic, external, pro-active

In reviewing the policy documents of the public broadcasters we notice a stronger emphasis on public responsibility – the rising star in our search. The count moved from 16 via 46 to 184 references. There was also more

stress on programme content requirements and on the cultural tasks of public broadcasters, as well as more attention to the position of minorities of different kinds. The more positive assessment of economic forces and a focus shifting towards individualism, which we found in government policy documents, were practically absent in texts of public broadcasters. The first is not surprising in a competitive media market, while the second seems to reflect the ambiguity public broadcasters have in combining a role-orientation towards audiences as individuals and as socially cohesive groups.

Our study thus shows that public broadcasters have learned to legitimize their *raison-d'être* more explicitly since the coming of competition, and to formulate their mission less in terms of organizational arrangements and more in terms of the program content they offer and the role they play in society. At the same time, social responsibility is no longer the exclusive asset of public broadcasters. It is a contested claim also relevant for commercial broadcasters that are supposed to behave responsibly and be accountable. But these claims are the subject of the next stage of study.

The evidence from the past decade indicates that national policies and specificities are being replaced by a kind of common European framework of broadcast policy. In fact, the EC Directive *Television without Frontiers* of 1989 marks the end of national public broadcasting monopolies and the beginning of broadcast 'dual systems' in most continental European countries. At the same time, the EU could not fully escape the question of how the cultural interest in content production should be safeguarded. For the coming years it is clear that a cultural policy can no longer be formulated in negative or 'exceptional' terms only (as in the separate paragraph in the Maastricht Treaty or the additional protocol to the Amsterdam Treaty). A deliberate cultural policy for the old continent needs new and fresh reflection on the social responsibility of communications media in the information society. Documents on converging communications policies (European Communications Council, 1997; European Commission, 1997) begin to reflect the relevance of communication content's own merit, and not as a mere affiliate of economic and infrastructural (i.e. telecommunications) policies. In fact, we see at the supranational level the same learning process that national governments went through over the last half-century.

At the same time, it seems clear that the circumstances have changed so profoundly that a rethinking 'from scratch' of social responsibility in broadcast media is imperative. The recent shift of public hegemony to dualistic competition in broadcasting makes it more difficult to safeguard a certain standard of social responsibility and public morality. Even more so because, as a result of liberalisation, deregulation and self-regulation, the power to materialise this has shifted from the state to social institutions and commercial enterprises. Moreover, it is not yet clear what the predominant broadcasting policy model of the future will be. Will there be a continuation of the present situation of highly regulated public broadcasters and less regulated commercial broadcasters, or will a new policy be introduced in which

both public and commercial broadcasters share social responsibility and public duties (see Achille & Mieke, 1994: 44)?

Partly as a result of this 'dual' media exposure, citizens have become more critical towards the social performance of enterprises and organisations. In the non-profit sphere, this trend towards direct accountability to the public forces organisations to redefine general legitimating goals more concretely and 'measurably'. Redefining goals and criteria has also been necessitated since old paternalistic imperatives, in terms of the cultural-pedagogic logic, are not taken for granted anymore. Social ethics have become more flexible, negotiable and individual, reflecting the changing social composition of (post) modern society.

All these trends require a more deliberate strategic policy of broadcast organisations in the future, in which public organisations no longer hold an exclusive claim on public duties, privileges and resources. After the first deluge of commercial broadcasting, this is also an important reason why there is a new political interest and backing for the subject of social responsibility in broadcast media.

Note

1. The authors are indebted to Lodewijk van Noort for his contribution to the research of which this chapter is a result.

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Appendix

Table 2. Number of SR norms

	I	II	III
SR-Norms			
access to audience (3) <i>access to citizens</i>	140	113	61
Representativity (organizational)	35	18	13
Forum / communication between groups	17		5
Public responsibility	16	46	184
Comprehensive programming	14	13	14
public interest	12	5	
Religion	11	8	29
Independence (government)	9	14	6
local/regional identity	7	42	31
Diversity (quality) <i>public responsibility</i>	7	11	83
News	6	27	99
Education	6	24	79
National identity	6	10	92
Autonomy	6	9	5
Availability	6	1	10
Entertainment	5	6	53
Balance (programming)	5	1	40
Culture	4	53	101
Diversity (quality) <i>programme supply</i>	4	12	157
Representativity	4		13
Information	3	21	125
public sphere	3	7	28
Art	2	10	67
Transparency	2	6	22
Freedom of speech	2	4	2
Objectivity (programming)	2	1	2
Security (state)	2		1
Continuity	2		
Non discrimination	2		
public order	2		
Minority groups/ sub cultural groups	1	29	124
Politics	1	6	10
Access to audience (2) <i>access to media</i>	1	6	7
Right of reply	1	6	
Equality (programming)	1	1	5
Democracy	1	1	1
Opinion	1		12
Authenticity	1		10
Integrity	1		4
Objectiveness (access to audience)	1		
public evaluation		46	4
Quality		16	78
Reach		11	
audience maximization		9	5
Representation of audience interests		7	
audience optimization		6	9
audience preferences		5	61

Table 2. Cont.

	I	II	III
Attractiveness		5	36
Objectivity (content)		5	33
Communication within groups/Social Cohesion	4	33	
Craftmanship		4	17
Non-commercial programming		4	1
Access to audience (2) access to citizens		3	82
Independence (econ. forces)		3	3
access to knowledge		2	38
Social values		2	30
Accountability (3)		2	6
access to audience (1) access to citizens		2	5
policy consistency		2	
Ideology		1	24
Access to audience (1) <i>access to media</i>		1	21
Creativity		1	7
balance (public vs. commercial)		1	
Choice			39
Reliability			12
Privacy			9
information selection			7
Innovation			5
Accountability (4)			4
Accuracy			3
Decency			3
information processing			3
Accountability (2)			2
Comprehensibility			2
openness (access to audience)			2
Responsible programming			2
Truth			2
Accountability (1)			1
cultural integration			1
equality (access of audience) <i>access to media</i>			1
Factuality			1
fairness (access to audience)			1
Fairness (content)			1
universal service (access of audience)			1

Policy Development in Danish Radio Broadcasting 1980-2002

Layers, Scenarios and the Public Service Remit

Per Jauert

In Denmark, the monopoly period of radio broadcasting ended in 1983 when local and community radio stations were launched. By the end of the 1980s commercial local radio was established and in 1988 got a market share of 20% – especially attracting the younger audiences. This new competitive environment forced the national public service broadcaster, Danmarks Radio [DR], to change its general policy and develop new programme strategies. The development of new formats, inspired by U.S. commercial radio, played an essential role in this process. From the mid-90s more radical changes were implemented in DR, involving a reformulation of the core values of the public service remit, a management-oriented restructuring of the organisation, and development of new production procedures and programme formats.

This chapter examines changes in the notion of DR public service radio broadcasting during this twenty-year period, focusing in particular on the development of new concepts of audience behaviour and programme preferences.¹ It describes the main components in the market situation and the influence of the converging media market at the turn of the century. What are the consequences of the approaching digitalisation for the general policy, and the strategic implications, for programme and channel format innovations in DR? And how will new production and distribution formats (DAB, webcasting, streaming, etc.), ‘narrowcasting’ and the more individualised audience behaviour influence the public service remit?

The overall policy changes in DR radio broadcasting have parallels in Nordic and other European countries, partly based on the strengthened co-operation (for instance in the strategic task force of EBU). In this sense, at least, the Danish case cannot be considered unique.

The modernisation process of radio broadcasting in Denmark

The modernisation of Denmark's Radio began in July 1959 when the traditional Danish Broadcasting Company (from 1964 simply DR, covering both radio and television) was challenged by a private commercial radio station. Radio Mercur broadcast its programmes from an old ship anchored in international water between Denmark and Sweden. The signal covered the eastern part of the country, including Copenhagen with a fourth of the total population. In a strict legal sense, Radio Mercur was not pirate radio. It did not violate any Danish law because it used a frequency not assigned to Denmark. But it was a challenge to dominate opinion among politicians and DR, based at that time on a strict, paternalistic interpretation of 'public service.' In practice, it questioned the view that radio broadcasting should not primarily be devoted to entertainment, and should therefore not allow popular music, rock and pop charts, fast talking DJs and commercials.

Scepticism and anxiety replaced widespread post-war fascination with American popular consumer culture, at least in the older generation and among the guardians of public service values. For them, radio was first and foremost a medium for enlightenment, the promotion of core values of high culture, and objective or neutral news programmes. Until 1964 news programmes were edited and controlled by the Association of Danish Newspapers, as agreed in the early days of radio on grounds that public radio should not compete with newspapers.

The Danish government struggled for four years before a new law was passed that made Radio Mercur illegal (Jensen, 1997, II: 182). But Danish radio audiences had already tasted the forbidden fruit and anxiety among the politicians grew when audience research proved that listeners preferred Radio Mercur to the DR channels (P1 & P2). A third channel (P3) was planned and launched in 1963 by DR, 'The Music Channel.' It had 14 hours of daily broadcasting and the programmes were mostly DJ presentations of popular music, including rock and pop charts, Top 20, etc., with special programmes in the afternoon for teenagers: "After school hours". Before P3 the only option for listening to that kind of programming was Radio Luxembourg. Despite the popularity of American English and lifestyles, done in a Danish context these programme types had a greater power of penetration.

But for many years to come, the Music Channel had to be considered an enclave among DR's radio channels. It was popular, but exactly how popular is difficult to say because audience research was rare, almost non-existent. Radio broadcasting was defined on the premises of the sender rather than the audience, and consequently a more comprehensive redefinition of the public service values and a reform of the channel system was only implemented at the end of the 1980s. But the seed of a slow process of reform was planted in 1963. During the sixties and early seventies the cracks in the walls supporting the traditional concept of public service broadcasting wid-

ened until they gave way in the 80s and 90s to cumulative changes in definitions of the public broadcasters' roles and concepts of the audience.

Archeological layers of public service

Recent media research in the Nordic countries has specified three "archaeological layers" in the notion of public service from 1925 until present days (cf. Syvertsen, 1992; Søndergaard, 1995; Hultén, 1996).

The first version defined the concept as a "*public utility*" that was technically/economically based, comparable to state provisions for mail, roads, railroads, etc. Here public service means a technical standard (as high as possible) in broadcasting for an efficient management and distribution system reaching all the citizens in the country. The first Director General of the BBC, John Reith, enjoined the phrase "*public service*" in his book *Broadcast over Britain* (1924). Reith developed his thoughts about radio as an instrument for enlightenment and as a distributor of cultural goods. But since these reflections were not related to the Danish notion of public service, the term at that time was primarily technical and economic in nature here.

The second version could be defined as "serving the public life, *the public sphere*". In the monopoly period (in the UK until 1955 and for Scandinavian countries until the 1980s), the term increasingly referred to content and cultural values. Here the public life and the public sphere are common denominators for the institutions and 'places' where individuals (as citizens) act in their capacities as citizens in relation to the public sphere, in contrast to their status as individual persons (bourgeois) when they are in the privacy of their homes. Broadcast media brought information and general knowledge to the public to enable citizens to act as such in the various processes of democracy. This definition emphasises distance from both the market and the state. This conception of public service was used by media financed by the licence-fee through the fifties up to the eighties, mainly to defend their monopoly situation and to avoid competition (as well as influence) from commercial media.

In the third archaeological layer, the concept of public service refers to "serving the public, *the public audience*". In this definition, the "public" is audience – citizens in their roles as *consumers* of media content in an individual or private sense. Here the function of public service media is to serve the needs of the audience as clients or customers (rather than as citizens). This definition became generally accepted in the late eighties and early nineties after the monopoly had ended and replaced by a duopoly, or even more competitive media environments, in line with the growth of commercial radio and television stations (Søndergaard, 1995: 24).

Based on the future-oriented policies of DR, now at the threshold of convergence and digitalisation, the question is whether public service broadcasting in these iterations is still a meaningful notion? One might argue that

the 'service' aspect seems to gain ground relative to the audience and also the introduction of more individualised programme formats. That is exemplified by digitised 'pull technology' features, i.e. in DAB: tune in and listen to your favourite programme when you want to, independent of programme schedules. The Internet offers similar options. But the 'pull technology' is not yet replacing the traditional push technology in broadcasting. One can, however, also advance the hypothesis that the segmentation and fragmentation of the Audience (into audiences) indicates the difficulty of maintaining the notion of the 'public arena' or a public sphere as a future core ingredient of the public service remit. An indication is the catch phrase in the DR radio strategic plan for 2003: "unique radio for everyone".

These three (or rather four) distinctions should not be considered as strictly separated over time but, rather, as elements in a slowly evolving process in which various aspects of the layers co-exist. One often finds this, for example, in diverse policies across different channels within the same public broadcasting institution.

The shift from the second to the third layer began in Denmark in the early eighties when public discussion about breaking DR's monopoly intensified. One of the major objections against the monopoly was based on the fear of political bias in programmes, especially in the news. The right-wing parties in parliament, especially the strong Liberal Party (Partiet Venstre), argued that an intellectual, left-wing elite in the capital dominated the news and was setting the agenda for political and cultural discussion in the country. The recommended solution was to break the monopoly. Decentralisation became the keyword in this political strategy.

But this decentralisation process factually began earlier when DR launched nine local stations (called Regional Radio) between 1972 and 1974. The programme output was rather limited during the first ten years, mainly concentrated on news and current affairs a few hours each day in the morning and late afternoon. The consequences for the general attitude towards DR were limited, however, and no major shifts in viewpoints and programme policy could be ascertained. Regional radio was a small-scale duplicate of the nation-wide DR. The liberal opposition nonetheless considered regional radio as a first step on the road to breaking the monopoly (Jauert, 1990: 102).

Similar developments took place in the other Nordic countries in the same period, so Denmark was by no means a special case (Hujanen & Jauert, 1998: 108). A Finnish research project indicated the background for deregulation was not only due to political pressures from liberal forces, but also highlighted internal inadequacies and contradictions in the monopolistic practices of public service companies. "Were this not the case private commercial broadcasting could not have successfully entered and subsequently unravelled the operational context of PSB" (Lowe, 1998: 114). The restructuring of Nordic PSB institutions during the late 1980s and early 1990's, especially changes in production planning and programme scheduling, should also be considered a vital part of a modernisation process. That was neces-

sary for legitimising the cultural values of the PSB institutions by taking a more reflective and responsive attitude to the needs and preferences of audiences (Hujanen, 1996; Kemppainen and Soramäki, 1996; Kemppainen, 2001; Lowe & Alm, 1997; Lowe, 1998).

The next step in the deregulation process of Danish radio broadcasting was taken in 1983 when an experimental period with private local and community radio (and television) began at the initiative of the government, led at that time by Social Democrats. The political intention was to strengthen local culture, local debate, local democracy and to extend the possibilities of public access. Commercials were still prohibited, but in spite of this limitation private media companies, including some newspapers, got involved in local and community radio mainly because of anticipated prospects for future income and, more immediately breaking the monopoly, eventually also on nation-wide radio broadcasting. The breakthrough for commercial radio came in 1987 when the experimental period was succeeded by a permanent law that allowed commercials in private local radio and introduced municipal and partial state funding for non-commercial community radio run by grassroots movements, local associations and minority groups.

As a result of the breaking of the radio monopoly, DR was transformed. After more than twenty years of only moderate changes in policy and programming, DR had to rapidly adjust several times to the new competitive situation during the nineties. Two major shifts in DR's overall policy took place – the first and a radical one during the period 1988-1992, and the second around the turn of the century.

Flow and formats – the development of new strategies 1988-1992

When local radio stations first made their entry in Denmark, they were not considered a serious threat to or by DR. They were not regarded as competitors but rather as a supplement provided by local, idealistic radio enthusiasts. This understanding changed within a few years. After commercials were permitted in 1988, and when about a dozen larger commercial local radio stations expanded to establish fully professional coverage in 'provincial' Western Denmark, the management in DR realised that the time had come for more radical changes in the former monopoly institution: in policy, organisation, production procedures, programming and approaches to the audience (Hujanen and Jauert, 1998: 114). This was accompanied in the same period by the breaking of the nation-wide public service television monopoly. A partly commercial, public service channel (TV 2) was launched in 1988.

At first the problematic could be considered a crisis of legitimacy. In earlier days DR could rely on claims for a unique position as the provider of culture, news, information and entertainment to the Danish public. Apart

from television broadcasts from neighbouring countries, there was no competition in the Danish broadcasting market before the end of the Eighties. But the context changes meant the legitimacy of DR could now be questioned. How much of the market share would it be acceptable to lose in relation, and to which part of the population, before it would be reasonable to argue for cut backs in the licence fee? The pressure from the liberal opposition was immediate and in the late eighties DR did in fact face minor reductions in its budgets. The licence fee for DR (both radio and television) was reduced to approximately 2 billion DKK per year (\$250 million in 2001 dollars); per household that was approximately 1,500 DKK per year (\$ 210 in 2001 dollars). DR had to initiate reductions in staff and redefine its organisation to manage on a smaller income. This resulted in periodically recurring internal crises and spells of paralysis (Sepstrup, 1994: 226).

The situation for radio was not as serious as for television, but the management was surprised to see the rapid growth and the popularity of the commercial local radio stations. The number of local radio stations has been fairly constant since 1987 at about 250, half of them commercial. Approximately 35 stations can be considered fully professional with a solid, economic base. The local radio turnover for commercials has not yet exceeded 2% of the total advertisement turnover, and at the beginning of the nineties it was around 120 million DKK (Jauert & Prehn, 1995: 122). This percentage has been quite stable since (Carlsson & Harrie, 2001: 214).

What explains the popularity of the commercial radio channels? First of all, they were formatted. The programme flow was aimed at the specific audience available at any given time of the day and ready to listen, although the style of music, DJ performance, and the 'pulse' or 'beat' of the channel soundscape could change over the day. In most cases it had to change because of the limited transmission area (max. 300,000 people) and also limitations in transmitter power (max. 160W to 3kW). Only in the two or three biggest cities could one establish local radio that was exclusively aimed at teenagers. Within a relatively broad music concept, European Hit Radio being the most common, one could vary the style of music over the day and create enclaves with 'oldies' or 'classic rock' or similar more specialised music formats. Within a few years some stations introduced music management – the music was no longer selected by the DJ. This was a familiar phenomenon in the USA, but was considered a revolution in the Nordic countries (around 1990). By now it is considered a normal routine (Kempainen, 1998; Kempainen, 2001). Although the resistance among DJs and journalists in DR was very strong, it was introduced in 1992 in P3 and has slowly spread to the other stations.

Secondly, the local atmosphere and community spirit in the programmes was a main factor contributing to their popularity. In contrast to the more 'official' language policy in Denmark's Radio, the language on local radio was in the dialect spoken in each respective area. The issues in the pro-

grammes were also rooted in locality and listeners were offered various services considered useful in daily life: traffic, weather, local events, etc.

Thirdly, the contact between local radio and listeners was more direct, varied and sometimes almost intimate. The number of phone-ins exceeded by far what was earlier the case in DR, and quizzes, debate programmes and 'night-hawk' talk radio became very popular and contributed to attaching listeners to the station. The local station became 'our radio' – in contrast to DR, which was identified with the atmosphere of the capital and high brow paternalism (Jauert & Prehn, 1995: 63). In all these respects, then, the commercial local radios represented a serious challenge to the old monopoly approach to public service radio and its programme policy and practice. The need for reform in DR was inescapable.

Thus, from 1988 an era of more radical changes, including a channel reform, was initiated in DR. From top to bottom the institution was involved in the development of the 'new radio'. In organisational and strategic terms it was a very deliberate action on the part of management because the operation was not just an adjustment of old routines. The aims and goals, as well as the general organisation of programme production and programme policy, were to be reformulated and restructured.

A new public service concept

The 'old radio' had mainly been organised as a production and broadcast institution. It considered itself primarily as a provider of cultural commodities, news and information, fulfilling the function of public service in the sense of "serving the public sphere, the public life". Although searching for a new attitude towards the audience, the aim and goal was to maintain key functions characterising the second era of public service principles.

After two years of internal discussions and restructuring, a 'constitution' for the new radio was formulated. Behind the official and formal wording of the new general policy paper for this modernised radio, it is obvious that the audience is more the focus of the institutional agenda: "... DR must show respect for the audience, be open towards it's criticism and engage it in the programs" (*DR Aims and Goals*, 1990). But it is one thing to change the general policy and formulate a new policy paper. It turned out to be more difficult to reorganise the production routines and to change and develop the programming.

New channel formats:

The general deregulation process and subsequent struggle for justification and legitimisation, prodded the managers of Nordic Broadcasting companies to seek inspiration from abroad, primarily in the North American radio markets (Kempainen, 1998; Kempainen, 2001). The term 'format radio'

was introduced to the Nordic broadcasting vocabulary, amongst other concepts inspired by the American radio producer and consultant, George Burns. In his capacity of Director of Burns Media Consultants, he visited Europe several times around 1990 and was, on one of these occasions, a keynote speaker for the European Radio Directors in the EBU [European Broadcasting Union] meeting in Heidelberg in 1990 (Leif Lønsmann 1990 – and interview March 8, 2001 with Leif Lønsmann, former Head of Radio Development in DR, since 1998 Director of Radio, DR). This reflects a general trend to seek inspiration and adopt influences ‘imported’ by consultants from abroad, and also via extensive programme staff visits to overseas commercial radio stations.

The evident inspiration from American/Canadian/Australian commercial format radio marked the transition from block radio to an adjusted version of flow radio and format principles. But format radio in the strictest sense was not yet introduced. Block radio is the essential programme structure of the old radio, representing mainly the sender perspective of broadcasting. Block programming in the monopoly period consisted of separated, single programs, each with its own title, form, subject and producer, often produced and presented without any relation to the previous program or to the one that followed (Lønsmann, 1990: 2).

The traditional block programming represents a concept of radio as a medium for listening in – a “lean-forward” listening approach to radio programmes. It presupposes the full attention of the listener. Flow radio instead underlines the function of radio as a companion to everyday activities of an audience. In the transition period, before the new format principles became dominate, flow principles were already introduced in 1963 when the Music Radio (P3) was launched. The original block radio principle continued on the two other channels, P1 and P2, until the reform period 1988-1992, but gradually opened possibilities for more flow elements in so called ‘streamlined blocks’, especially in daytime slots (e.g. ‘morning drive’).

In 1992 the channel reform was completed and DR had four radio channels on three frequencies (see Table 1.). With this arrangement DR wished to emphasise a protest against what was considered an obstruction towards its endeavour to meet the new demands of the competitive radio market. Since 1982 it had been possible to launch a fourth nation-wide FM station, but Danish politicians had not subsequently been able to decide whether to assign it to DR, to another public service provider (i.e. TV 2), or to a commercial company, similar to P4 in Norway.

The ideal situation for DR was to have two full service channels, aimed at large audiences and with different music formats meant for a younger (P3) and then (P2) for an older audience (DanmarksKanalene-The Denmark Channel). Supplementing those formatted channels was P1, a content-defined channel meant for smaller, specific and changing target groups. P2 Music was a content-defined channel as well, mainly devoted to classical music and new experimental, Danish music. But with four channels on three fre-

quencies, the Denmark Channel and P2 Music had to share one frequency, with the Denmark Channel broadcasting during the daytime and P2 Music during evening hours and weekends.

Table 1. DR Channel reform 1988-completed 1992

P1 – Channel 1 <i>Narrow Content defined</i>	The channel for culture and the spoken word. Focus on national culture, enlightenment, talk and radio documentary, features and fiction
P2 Music – Channel 2 <i>Narrow Content defined</i>	Classic radio. Focus on Danish music and orchestras, Danish presentation and co-operation with the national music scenes.
P2 The Denmark Channel- Channel 2 <i>Music and age format</i>	Nine regional radios, partly networking; a full service channel for the mature audience (40+) with a music format, according to that.
P3 – Channel 3 <i>Music and age format</i>	A 24 hour full service channel for the young audience , 12-40 with news, journalism, service – with a music profile aimed at the younger generation

The new channel structure cannot be considered a completed reform on the principles of format radio due to the specific market situation with limited audience groups, and also because of the political demand for only a modest redefinition of public service principles. But the DR objective was to present more programme diversity, attract larger audiences and serve smaller target groups with specific interests. The 1992 channel reform was an adjustment to the new competitive environment rather than a radical change.

Organisation and production:

One of the major obstacles to an immediate channel reform was the inadequacy of the bureaucratic organisation of programme production to meet the new demands from the new channel reform. In the old radio different departments were regarded as expert formations, i.e. current affairs, drama, music, documentary, news, etc. They were editorial units and did not have to serve specific programme or audience defined goals within a defined channel. Often they regarded themselves as competitors to other editorial units and one of the major aims was to defend the size of the annual budget and certain time slots once they had been appointed to the department (Jensen 1997, III: 190; Lowe, 2000).

In spite of the evident insufficiency of the old organisation, it took DR almost four years, from 1988 to 1992, to reorganise the production units. The former expert formations were replaced by four channel divisions, supplemented by a few expert departments (i.e. news, drama), each responsible for its own channel and organised in flexible and changing production teams.

Already in late eighties some of the regional stations experimented with so-called 'self-regulated groups' where journalists, producers and technicians deliberately crossed the borders between professions in order to be flexible and to better serve production and audience needs. These experiments turned out to be quite successful and by the turn of the century there was greater flexibility, although DR still had professional boundaries (Hujanen & Jauert, 1998: 122).

Increased competition and upcoming media integration: 1992 – 2002

After the channel reform in 1992, DR continued to maintain both a high share (78% of the market) and a high weekly reach (more than 90%). In these respects DR was the second strongest among the Nordic public service broadcasters. In the same year YLE had a share of 73%, NRK a share of 67% and SR a share of 96% – SR having no commercial competitors (Radio Research Department, DR 1997). But during the nineties the DR market share was slowly decreasing, reaching 67 % in 2001 (Radio Research Department, DR 2001).

Strategic planning within DR was intensified and in 1994 a new general policy document was published, called *Denmark's Radio 1995-2005: A report of DR's values, program policy and development*. It represented a further development of market-oriented strategies from the end of the eighties, now supplemented by reflections on the core values of public service. Which qualities in the program are essential for a public service, partly market independent, institution? The answer was not simply to "serve the audience" but instead it talked about "radio and television in service of the people", a reaction against tendencies to populism in the program policy. The report underlined the public service obligation to "strengthen the citizen's ability to act in a democratic society" and in this respect reformulated some of the core issues of the second layer in the public service concept (Søndergaard, 1995: 36).

Simultaneously, the extensive strategic report heralded a new era in the history of DR because its intention was obviously to clarify the core public service values of pivotal importance for the institution during the next decade. This was a first step in the 'branding' process, having a major impact on the media policy debate as well as substantial internal consequences for the organisation as a whole. The new strategic plan was in fact implemented as a guideline for the development of efficient (compared to previous attempts) internal planning instruments, for instance for the development of definitions of quality measures for specific genres and channel formats.

The notion of programme quality ascribed an increased importance in accentuating special "DR qualities" as a public service broadcaster. From 1998, the programme producing units have tried to encircle quality criteria for certain

Table 2. DR Core PSB Values.*DR core public service values 1995-2005*

In order to strengthen the citizen's ability to act in a democratic society DR must be a broadcasting institution dependant on the wishes and needs of the whole population, but independent from economical and political specific interests must increase the options in relation to the market oriented supply of radio and television broadcasting giving weight to Danish Culture

Source: Denmark's Radio 1995-2005: 30

genres, i.e. entertainment, sport, culture, children's programmes, drama etc.² This innovation process included the audience through focus groups, in depth interviews and informal discussion forums with rank and file programme producers. The involvement of the 'people on the floor' proved to be very important for relatively successful changes of the production processes and the re-structuring and rationalisation of production units as a result of the 1995 strategic plan. An increasing portion of programme production is put out for tender and several production units are in this way competing with each other across channel borders, and also with external companies, to deliver to certain slots (or roughly outlined concepts ready to be filled with content).

This process has sharpened the attention among the staff towards the quality aspects, but at the same time has caused fragmentation in the corporate culture. Many staff members consider the increased focus on the market and the internal competition as a threat against the core public service values, and for those it is hard to accept that the production units expand or shrink concurrently with the number of tenders they win or lose. The introduction and results of the increased management has led to a troubled corporate atmosphere and several internal crises, reaching its peak in September 2002 when a three week long strike among the journalist and the production teams broke out. This was caused by the introduction of performance-related pay as the principle for salaries. From a management point of view this trimming of the organisation obviously had a two-fold rationale. On the one hand it prepares the organisation to meet the reality of increased market competition. On the other hand it is to enable success without substantially increasing the licence fee. In other words, this is a classical way of legitimising the publicly funded organisation in this period of deregulation characteristic of a political climate dominated by neo-liberal thinking.

The focus on content development was supplemented by more concrete policy plans, shaped by the upcoming digitalisation and media integration. Other European countries, first and foremost UK and Sweden, have invested in the development of digital audio broadcasting. But DR has been more cautious and did not launch DAB until October 2002. For the time being on DR's DAB channels, one can find parallel broadcasting of the satellite and Internet Classic Music channel, a 24-hour News Channel (DNR 24), organ-

ised on a 1 hour wheel, four music channels, a compiled talk channel, and an open transmission channel from the Parliament (see Table 3). Excepting the Classic Music Channel, all other music channels are mere jukeboxes. The news channel is low-budget repetition, the talk radio channel is compiled from DR's FM radio channels and the DR Demokrati [The Democracy Channel, see table 3] is unedited transmission. This reluctant strategy is a result of a complicated pattern of technological based visions of new products, economic constraints and uncertainties related to the social and behavioural consequences of the implementation of new features in the social uses of traditional broadcasting, and, not least, to date extremely few DAB listeners.

One of the major problems is the lack of specifically new programme content for the digital platform, i.e. elements of interactivity and more pull applications (news, features, on demand, etc.), in turn related to the uncertainty of consumer acceptance and willingness to use or buy the new products. From the consumer's point of view, what would be the motivation to buy a DAB receiver for €800 or even €200 when the digital surplus is hard to find – and you cannot switch to your favorite DR FM station, but instead must turn on your older receiver for this option? Thinking about the social uses of the broadcast media, “the sociability” and for broadcast radio the “companionship” in daily life routines – one wonders if this could be replaced by active and selective consumers arranging their own media menu? Such doubts have been part of the general policy considerations in DR leading to the present reluctant position, influenced also by Swedish experiences with DAB when SR chose to close down nation-wide DAB activities in 2002 (Public Access, 2002: 1).

Thus, uncertainty about the dominating future scenario for the digital future of media convergence has resulted in a DR strategy that is concentrated on a refinement of channel and programme formatting. DR Radio has tried to increase the quality aspects of certain genres and, in these ways, prepare the programme units for a future where DR is not only a content provider but also a distributor of different, integrated media products on several technological platforms.

Scenarios for convergence

Three scenarios have dominated the policy debates and visions of the digital future at DR. They have been named “*The Sea of information*”, “*The Digital Lagoons*” and “*The Media Islands*”. The archipelago metaphor represents extreme positions in the visions of the near future as imagined by the media players. Like many other scenarios, they are not to be considered exclusive. One should think of them as realistic options within different time frames.³

“The Sea of Information” is based on the dominant position of the Internet as *the* technological platform for the digital era. It is individualistic, open

and anarchic. The computer wins because of its “lean forward” culture and its individual and interactive character. This contrasts with the “lean backward” culture of the traditional broadcast media where the same content is distributed simultaneously to many consumers at the same time. The future reception – or the interaction – takes place on the basis of technologically merged, flexible (independent of place) terminals and is made on the basis of individual, free choice among an indefinite number of content providers. The user is “fishing” his or her media products from the digital sea.

“The Digital Lagoons” is also called “the gatekeeper scenario”. Here consumer possibilities to choose are controlled by a few global and vertically integrated players, i.e. Murdoch, AOL/Time Warner, etc. The distribution takes place within defined standards and the consumer is tied to the gatekeeper’s digital packet solution, the domestic set top box. The television set is the dominating, interactive entertainment station. The computer is more dedicated to work functions. The gatekeepers hold the copyrights for dominating content formats as well as a de facto – through subscription – ownership in relation to the customer.

“The Media Islands” is a scenario of stagnancy. Lack of demand on interactivity, lack of bandwidth and insufficient investments in technological infrastructure keep the development on a ‘not converted’ track. This scenario is distinguished by emphasising traditional socially and culturally integrating functions. The idea is that as consumers and citizens we consider ourselves – also in our media consumption – as part of greater community and look askance at development that is dominated by devices based on technological possibilities rather than socially grounded needs. According to this scenario, the media landscape will not change radically compared to the present. The competition between public service broadcasters and the private players will still exist, but it will take place in discrete sectors. According to the report, this scenario is not to be considered a special Danish phenomenon⁴, but rather as an indication of universal constraints and mechanisms pointing in a direction other than convergence (*Konvergens i netværkssamfundet*: 95).

Based on the strategic decade plan from 1995, DR has navigated between those three scenarios in its policy and planning processes. For DR Radio, none of the three has been a dominant preference. The Director for Radio proclaimed a few years ago that DR Radio will broadcast “through all cracks and crevices in the Radio House of DR.” DR’s goal has been to strengthen its capacity as a media content provider rather than continue ‘just’ as public service radio through its declared intention to be present on *all* distribution platforms:

- analogue broadcast radio: where the content provider (DR) still composes the programme output
- digital audio broadcasting: where the EPG will develop a mixture of pull and push programme deliveries; the listener will be able to com-

pose his/her own programme menu during the day and combine radio output with written, supplementary information

- radio on the WWW: where the listener will be able to compose different media elements from the DR web site; parallel 'broadcasting' of the analogue DR channels, DR web-radio, DR streaming audio (music, jukebox function), supplementary written information, video clips, etc.

In early 2001, DR Radio finally got the licence for the fourth nation-wide FM channel in competition with a number of commercial companies, including MTG (Viasat) and also Clear Channel Communication (USA) in a joint venture application with the three biggest national morning papers. DR Radio kept its monopoly on national radio and a market share of 67%. The other 33% is claimed by the local commercial radios. But the new liberal-conservative government has now decided to approve the launch of two nation-wide commercial stations in 2003 plus a total deregulation of the local commercial radio market, allowing unlimited networking. This has put fresh pressure on DR and intensified the formatting and branding of existent analogue channel profiles and, furthermore, advanced the timetable for launching new digital services.

So far the effort expended on these new services has been rather modest, although DR Online (www.dr.dk) has expanded and three years ago was supplemented by streaming three of the analogue channels. The primary scheduled programmes have distinct web sites with additional information and the possibility to download recent programmes. In an attempt to win back the youngest part of the youth audience (12-20 years) from the commercial local music radios, DR Radio created three music web streams on DR Online aimed at this target group. They are a part of the growing youth communities on the site, organised around BOOGIE – a popular MTV inspired television show involving all three platforms and interactivity via chat rooms and SMS messages.

But that is the only example (so far) of such a media integrated initiative. It is remarkable that the total DR (radio, television and online activities) investments in integrated programme initiatives, including DAB activities, over the last three years has been less than 2% of the annual budget of 3 billion DKK (*DR Beretning og regnskab*, 1998-2001). Because the number of digital receivers has been minimal to date, and considering the recent launch of DAB broadcasting and the development plans for the next couple of years, it is far too early to predict a break through.

But one can detect some optimism because of the new digital, cheap DAB receiver being introduced for approximately €200, similar to the UK initiative in 2001. One of the obstacles seems to be out of the way, but leaves the most crucial to be addressed: will the audience find the digital programme 'surplus value' sufficiently attractive to invest?

In the course of 2003, when the DAB system is fully established, the plan is to launch 10 DAB channels with a number of interactive and on demand

Table 3. DR channel reform 2001: "Unique radio for everyone"

P1 – Channel 1 <i>Narrow Content defined</i> <i>Brand:</i> <i>Thought-provoking radio</i>	The channel for culture and the spoken word. Focus on national culture, enlightenment, talk, debate and radio documentary, features, fiction, drama.
P2 Music – Channel 2 <i>Narrow Content defined</i> <i>Brand:</i> <i>Music and Culture</i>	Classic radio and new musical genres. Focus on Danish music and orchestras, Danish presentation and co-operation with the national music scenes. Special programmes about books and literature.
P3 – Channel 3 <i>Music and age</i> <i>format 20-40,</i> <i>contemporary hits</i> <i>Brand: Tuned in radio</i>	A 24 hour full service channel for the younger audience, format news, journalism, service – with a music profile aimed at the younger generation. Focus on DJ's (hosts), satire, events – interaction with youth programmes on TV and the DR web communities, incl. web-radio.
P4 – Channel 4 <i>Music and age</i> <i>format 40+</i> <i>Classic hits</i> <i>Brand: Present radio</i>	Nine regional radios, partly networking; a full service channel for the mature audience (40+), with a corresponding music profile, news, debates (on local issues), live music, call-in programmes.
New DAB channels (8)	DR Classic (Music-parallel broadcasting, satellite and Internet Radio) DRN 24 (24 hours news radio, based on a 1 hour time wheel.) DR Rock (music) DR Soft (music) DR Jazz (music) DR Skum (music – Parallel broadcasting : Internet Channel "Boogie Skum") DR Plus (Talk Radio – compiled programmes from the four FM channels) DR Demokrati (Transmissions from The Parliament)

features – 50% news, current affairs and enlightenment programmes and 50% music, fiction, entertainment, sport and service. The activities on DR Online will expand, including streaming of all analogue channels and the launch of new music web streams for the upper part of the younger audience (20-35 years). Radio on Demand, Enhanced Radio and I-Radio (Interactive Radio) are all being developed on an internal, experimental lab basis, but as a part of the DR Radio Strategy Plan for 2003 (*Strategi 2003*).

On the cusp of the converted era one can conclude that DR Radio has met the digital challenges with a cautious but open mind. The investments and resources spent on new technological devices have been prioritised, targeting the most motivated groups. The most important strategic investment has been put into trimming and reorganising the company, preparing its structure and its programme production potentials for increased competitive market conditions. On the other hand, the focus on the audience as more individualised (or at least even more segmented) consumers has been sharpened by the more precise formatting of channels and programmes (see Table 3).

The notion of public service seems even more difficult to define or re-define in an era where traditional broadcasting is confronted with the digital challenge. But DR Radio has, in a very obvious manner, maintained the different archaeological layers of programme types and genres. In this way one can claim that DR Radio has tried to practice the public service remit in its historical context. Especially in P1, one can find reminiscences of programme phenomena originating from the early days of the radio pioneers. The cultural and social integrative strength of radio is thus still evident. With a minor change of the predicament noted by John Ellis concerning the future of broadcasting, one can agree that "broadcast radio [television] will continue as a distinctive form of radio..." (Ellis, 2000: 176, quoted in Søndergaard, 2000: 26).

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Notes

1. The notion 'public service' was not commonly used either in legislation or in public debate about broadcasting in Denmark until the early 1980s when the deregulation process was initiated. Previously the term "in service of the public" [I almenhedens tjeneste] was used. In the final report of the state Media Commission (1980 – 1985) published in 1985: In *Betænkning om dansk mediepolitik. Betænkning nr. 1029.1985* [Report on Danish Media Policy] the reader will find the notion 'public service' in common usage in relation to public broadcasting media.
2. The results of projects have been published (in Danish) in a book series from DR called *Programkvalitet* [Programme Quality]. The first on drama, entertainment and culture was published in 1998.
3. The three scenarios are described in the report titled *Konvergens i netværkssamfundet* [Convergence in the Network Society], published by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Research, Technology and Development in 2001. The scenarios are shaped by statistics about media use, growth analyses in media, and from a number of qualitative interviews with key persons within the telecommunications sector in Denmark, conducted by KPMG Consulting.
4. In Denmark, the number of personal computers with Internet access and the number of mobile phones place the country among the Top 5 nations in global comparisons (*Media Trends*, 2001: 216).

Public Service Broadcasting and Digital Television in the UK

The Politics of Positioning

Georgina Born

The advent of digital television [DTV] and the convergence between television, computing and telecommunications technologies augur radical changes in the media ecology. In the context of the ensuing technological, economic, regulatory and cultural uncertainties, some analysts argue that public service broadcasting faces new threats (Søndergaard 1998; Chalaby and Segell 1999), others that it bears new responsibilities (Graham 1997, 2000; Inglewood 2000; Born and Prosser 2001).¹ Clearly, public service broadcasters [PSBs] have both to adjust and to take advantage of the new opportunities afforded by convergence. As convergence gathers speed it brings a proliferation of new platforms and services, some of which will fall away as markets and technologies mature.

If, with limited resources, the PSBs cannot be in every new market, then the question arises: where *should* the PSBs involve themselves? The question is both normative and political. It is also the central policy challenge faced by the PSBs themselves in the convergence context. This chapter is based on the results of a 2001 study that examined how Britain's two main PSBs, the BBC and Channel Four [C4], were positioning themselves in the new markets, and specifically in DTV.² The study looked at the character and content of the broadcasters' strategies for DTV, and at how the strategies were developed. The chapter compares their DTV strategies, assessing their relative public service value. The analysis also highlights the implications of the study for sociological theory, particularly recent developments in economic sociology.

Broadcasting as a cultural economy

The approach taken here forms part of the 'cultural turn' in economic sociology. This subsumes a number of directions, including analyses of the converging processes of 'culturalization' of the economy and 'economization' of culture, of 'the representational and discursive constitution of economic life',

and of 'the increasing centrality of marketing and information in the management of economic institutions and processes' (Slater and Tonkiss 2001: 175; see also Lash and Urry 1994; du Gay and Pryke 2002). One important component of the cultural turn has been attention to the framing and constitution of markets by economic expertise and other calculative agents and institutions (Callon 1998; Barry and Slater 2002; Carrier and Miller 1999). Similarly, Beck's analysis of 'reflexive modernization' lays stress on the role of expert discourses, the struggle for discursive primacy and the place of discourse coalitions in responding to conditions of chronic uncertainty and risk (Beck 1992, 1999; Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994).

In such accounts, economic and other forms of expertise are considered in terms of their *performativity* and *effects* – how they fold into and condition the social process itself. This study shows that C4 and the BBC independently determined their DTV strategies through techniques of market analysis and research, interpretation of that research and, on that basis, *projections* of future markets. The projections are folded into institutional strategies; they become the basis for the PSBs' broadcasting and new media practices, and from this emanate out to condition larger economic, social and cultural processes.

Even the cultural turn, with few exceptions (Callon 1998; Cochoy 1998; Slater 2002), has underestimated the intensifying impact of the marketing sciences and their discourses of strategy and positioning, developments that are pervasive in, but far from limited to, the media industries. With its projective logics, marketing's role is to humanise economic decision-making by marrying it with both apparently unassailable financial models and methodical readings of the desires and habits of audiences. As Slater argues, for advertising, "each market/product definition is in fact a strategy...[that], by seeking to produce particular definitions of markets and products,...is seeking to establish in reality...a particular constellation of both consumption relations and competitive relations" (Slater 2002: 68).

Thus, if it is true that intensified competition following the growth of multichannel television in the UK has driven C4 to commercialise and diversify, such an interpretation nevertheless under-represents the complexity of C4's response. It is here that a discursive analysis is necessary, one that probes the forms of expertise, the collective thinking and rhetorics employed by C4 executives in their struggle to process uncertainty. For there *is* agency, given the powerful structural forces, but it is an agency mediated by the discourses currently ascendant in the international broadcasting field. The strategic rationales offered by BBC and C4 executives for their DTV ventures precisely provide a window on these prevailing discourses. They also provide evidence of the 'virtualism' noted by Carrier and Miller (1999: 2): the rising power in contemporary institutions of prescriptive economic abstractions that "seek to make the world conform to their virtual vision". The case of DTV shows how this tendency is epitomised in the ICT industries, with their expansive technological logics and futurist projections.

The material presented here adds a new element to economic sociology's cultural turn by highlighting the constructions of *time* involved in the framing of markets. Strategy and positioning are themselves hybrid 'art-sciences' that, by 'seeking to produce' and 'seeking to establish' as Slater puts it, are engaged in competitive use of techniques of projection and anticipation, through which they attempt to bring into being a coming reality. That is to say, a new structure of the field (Bourdieu 1993). Processes of rhetorical closure are central here: depicting a projected scenario as inevitable, as the only possibility, or as a present actuality. The more persuasive the rhetoric, the more consonant with prevailing industry discourses, the more likely that the projections will be effective and will *produce* a reality.

The BBC and Channel 4 enter digital television

The BBC and C4 are good for comparison. They have different funding bases (licence fee revenue for the BBC versus advertising for C4), regulatory structures (self-regulation via the BBC Board of Governors as opposed to external regulation by the Independent Television Commission [ITC] for C4), organisational structures (the BBC a vertically integrated producer-broadcaster, C4 a broadcaster commissioning from independent producers) and audience profiles (the BBC committed to universality while C4 seeks demographics attractive to its advertisers, i.e. higher socio-economic groups, or 'ABC1s', and younger audiences).

They also have different remits. The BBC must provide information, education and entertainment programming of a high standard that offers a wide range of subject matter for local and national audiences, as well as ensuring accuracy and impartiality in the treatment of controversial subjects. C4 is required to complement ITV by providing distinctive output and by innovation and experimentation in the form and content of programmes. C4's licence renewal by the ITC in 1998 stipulated increased commitment to these requirements, as well as to education, multicultural programming and regional production.³

In Britain DTV has been introduced in curious and fragile conditions. In 1999, and reiterated in a 2000 White Paper, government announced that Britain must move to DTV by 2010 and that PSB must remain at its core. The industry has therefore been impelled to move rapidly into DTV. The directive was met by substantial consumer resistance fuelled by 1) the fragmented market represented by three competing platforms: digital terrestrial television [DTT], digital cable [Dcab] and digital satellite [Dsat], 2) poor technical quality in DTT and DCab, and, above all, 3) the dominance of pay television in DTV.⁴ This has led consumer organisations to stress the need for attractive free-to-air offerings to draw audiences to DTV, and to highlight the PSBs' vital role in achieving this (Consumers' Association 2001a, 2001b).

In the same period that the UK's commercially-funded PSBs were being enjoined to move into DTV, they faced severe advertising recession, intensified competition and declining budgets for expanding multichannel services. Such economic uncertainties led them to develop new multi-revenue business models in the image of Murdoch's Sky; and subscription has been identified as the main source of revenue growth (ITC 2001). In 2002 the pressures culminated in the collapse of ITV's DTT venture. Throughout the period BSkyB's DSat platform has remained dominant in the UK with its vertical links to Sky channels, premium film and sports content. The threat to pluralism posed by dominant players with monopolistic controls over distribution linked to premium content is notable (Shooshan and Cave 2000). The economics of commercial digital channels are themselves fragile, and in 2001 several folded. There is now a new emphasis in industry debates on the need for high quality content to drive digital take-up.

The current situation also involves cultural and social uncertainties, particularly changes in the way television is watched with multichannel, timeshift and personal video recorder technologies, and the potential segmentation of audiences consequent on these changes. As yet there is little agreement on how far-reaching such changes will be and how far they will erode viewers' desire for 'mass generalist' or 'universal' channels (Gripsrud 1999, Ellis 2000). Added to this is the UK's present regulatory uncertainty as the industry faces a transition to a unified, 'light-touch' media and telecommunications regulator, Ofcom, outlined in the White Paper and the 2002 draft Communications Bill. Many issues remain unresolved in the draft Bill, among them the degree to which the BBC will be regulated by Ofcom in the future.

For all the wider uncertainty, and following two decades of falling or static income and political hostility, the BBC is in a period of expansion with increased funding and political support from New Labour, albeit in the context of their pro-Murdoch programme of liberalisation. The BBC has done so well competitively since Greg Dyke's ascent as Director General in 2000 that the main criticisms now are of excessive populism and unfair trading – of the BBC's inappropriate entry into and/or dominance in new markets which, it is argued, threaten to stifle commercial enterprise. These criticisms form part of the ongoing questioning of the legitimacy of PSB, a constant in the British context since the 1980s. But the BBC has been resilient. In the later 1990s, through efficiency savings, commercial income and international partnerships, it funded the development of new online services, commercial and public service television channels. In 2000, government agreed a 7-year, £200m rise in licence fee income to fund further digital expansion. The BBC advanced plans for 5 digital radio networks, including 2 new stations targeted at Britain's main ethnic minorities, and 4 free-to-air DTV channels: a mixed genre but entertainment-led youth channel, BBC3 (to replace the existing BBC Choice), a channel for culture, science, the arts and ideas, BBC4 (replacing BBC Knowledge), and two channels for children, CBeebies and

CBBC. These new digital channels are in addition to the existing BBC News 24, BBC Parliament, BBC1 and BBC2.

The digital proposals were decidedly *not* driven by a market failure conception of the BBC's role. The BBC argues that it is legitimate to position its new channels in competitive markets because such interventions help drive the UK's economic success by setting and raising standards through relatively high-budget origination (BBC 2000a). In designing the channels, the BBC stressed three factors which distinguish them from commercial competitors: 1) no advertising; 2) that they will contain a high proportion of original British programming, with budgets higher than DTV norms; and 3) that each channel will contain a mix of genres, unlike the niche-channel DTV norm. In 2001 government ruled on the BBC's plans, passing all of them except BBC3 because of its potentially detrimental effect on C4's and Sky's youth channels, whose market share, analysts argued, would be likely to fall. The subsequent debate over BBC3 set a worrying precedent in that competition issues – the interests of commercial competitors – threatened to prevail over public service arguments in government thinking. However in September 2002 a revised proposal for BBC3 was passed, albeit with stringent regulatory conditions attached.

C4's recent history moves from plenty to restraint. In the 1990s C4 was economically healthy and expansive: from 1993 it was permitted to sell its own advertising, and its substantial profits were ploughed back into new services and the rising costs of its hit US programmes. After Michael Jackson became Chief Executive in 1997, staff numbers rose rapidly and new commercial services began. Two digital subscription channels were launched: the film channel Film Four in 1998, and E4, a youth entertainment channel, in 2001. C4 has grown new Internet, interactive and cross-platform operations. With *Big Brother* and *Big Brother 2*, C4 is considered to have pioneered multi-platform programming in the UK. The second show ran in real time on its own website and at times on E4, with edited highlights on the main C4 channel.⁵ Both offered 'interactivity': the opportunity to phone in and vote for contestants. In 2001 a subsidiary, 4Ventures Ltd., was set up to encompass C4's commercial offshoots. With E4 and the main channel's greater youth focus, C4's operations were increasingly competitively oriented towards the populist, low budget channels Sky One and Channel 5. Further C4 plans include a horse-racing and betting pay channel, At The Races, more educational activities, and a teenage web portal. But 2001 saw economic downturn, a freeze on budgets and job losses. The question arose whether C4 had expanded too far and too fast.

Developing strategic rationales for DTV

A focus on strategy was unknown in the BBC until the 1990s, when it developed following the former DG John Birt's expanding employment of man-

agement consultants and marketing executives throughout the corporation. Under Greg Dyke, strategy has been streamlined. Each strategist now works both for Corporate Centre on macro issues of competition, market context and performance, and with a channel controller on short and medium-term issues including editorial and marketing concerns. Planning the digital channels, the controllers, marketers and strategists worked together “to establish the competitive environment, market need, audience need, and what [the] channel proposition is going to be”. Substantial market research was carried out, some of which was publicly released in an attempt to legitimise the strategic thinking (e.g. ECON 1999; Spectrum 2001).

In C4, there had been no engagement with strategy prior to 1997. When Jackson arrived from Birt’s BBC, he installed a strategic approach, recruiting a number of pay television executives and strategists from management consultancy. Market analysis became increasingly central, resulting in 1999 in a corporate strategy which proposed that C4 should become a cross-platform media company by extending its ‘core reputation’ as a brand centred on film, entertainment, sports and factual programming.

In 2001, BBC and C4 executives offered a series of strategic rationales for the DTV plans. They coalesce into ten variables that are summarised for each broadcaster below. There are both overlaps and differences between the two PSBs, the differences stemming primarily from their different economic bases.

1) Increasing and diversifying revenue streams:

In the context of falling advertising income and looming recession, this economic rationale is the driving force behind C4’s DTV plans. The aim is to cushion the main channel from future budget shortfalls. Revenues from subscription channels, sponsorship, rights trading, commercial interactive and cross-platform services, merchandising and Internet extensions are seen as imperative to secure funding for C4’s public service commitments. For some, C4’s commercialisation is a good in itself: C4’s public service remit for innovation and risk-taking is seen as also bringing commercial rewards. A major concern is C4’s vulnerable position in the new ‘value chain’. Its identity is focused on ‘aggregating content’ (or channels), and this is considered a relatively powerless position in comparison with platform owners and rights-owning production companies. The prospect of C4 moving into production or distribution is seen as a possibility. Competition between platforms is considered essential for C4’s health by ensuring competing buyers for the C4 brand. By contrast, this rationale is not apparent in BBC thinking about its new DTV services. While some commercial spin-offs through BBC Worldwide are envisaged, they are not a priority.

2) Maintaining and increasing audience share:

For both broadcasters, the new channels are intended to help maintain or add audience share to the existing channels. At C4, share in multichannel

homes is now taken as the key measure of success because those homes are assumed to be indicative of the future, and because C4's target audiences (16-34 year olds and ABC1s) are early adopters of DTV. Moreover there is a significant, worrying gap between C4's share in terrestrial and in multichannel homes. For advertisers, future share will be aggregated across the C4 channels, giving a '4share'. Changes in C4's share have huge economic repercussions: each percentage point represents £50m in advertising income. In multichannel homes, E4 is expected to add 2% to the main channel's current 6-7% share. For the BBC, in comparison, while maintaining share matters greatly for reasons of legitimacy, there is no direct economic pressure to maximise share. Nonetheless, by improving the output, BBC3 and BBC4 are intended to raise the share of the channels they replace.

3) Extending and strengthening the brand:

For C4, the new activities are seen as extending the brand by exploiting what are deemed to be C4's 'core values' and strengths. Market research was carried out early in the strategy process to elucidate these; and it continues in a tracking study which probes whether audiences see C4 as representing the core values more than competitors, and to what extent the new services embody the values. The core values are given in documents as: 'contemporary', 'smart', 'innovative', 'risk-taking', 'freedom', 'new perspectives', 'commercial', 'creativity and excellence', 'production quality', and 'let the viewers decide'. These are often cited by those engaged in the new ventures, although their relation to C4s practice remains to be interrogated. The concept of diversity – also mentioned, and originally a key term in C4's remit – is not listed, but is subsumed within 'freedom' in a limited way: "Channel 4 believes in individual freedom and seeks to promote diversity of opinion and freedom of expression". While the BBC has less economic incentive to strengthen brand recognition, the less instrumental functions of branding – building consumer awareness, loyalty, attraction and affection – are seen to be of immense significance, as much as for C4. There is great concern among executives that the strength of the BBC brand has been eroded particularly among the young. This links to...

4) Generational renewal and demographic concerns:

Both C4 and the BBC are alarmed by market research suggesting that the concept of PSB has little meaning for Britain's youth, while it is the under-35s who are most attracted by multichannel commercial television. The DTV strategies are conceived as a central means of building an audience among the young, and thereby a future audience for PSB. C4 sees its new services as a means of attracting young viewers and renewing the audience for C4's vision of PSB. At C4 the need for generational renewal is translated into the case for innovative entertainment, embodied in E4. An executive explained: "Increasingly, we say to ourselves we've got to be the public service broad-

caster that keeps in touch with the audience that wouldn't dream of tuning in to public service broadcasting. If public service values are going to remain in touch with that generation, E4 is a bridgehead into what is essentially alien territory". The BBC also sees its new services, particularly BBC3 and the children's channels, as essential responses to the ebbing identification of young people with the BBC and as a way to renew its relationship with young viewers who will otherwise be lost to the corporation in future.

5) Adapting to the pay television economy:

Another set of rationales concerns the pay-TV economy and the need to remain connected to its consumers and technologies. Significant differences exist between C4 and the BBC:

- At C4, the assumption is that pay-TV is the future and that C4 must therefore enter it. A strategist commented: "We have to [think], 'How is the market moving?'; and if people are beginning to expect to pay for services, if we don't acknowledge that reality we are in danger of finding ourselves in a fast-moving market [with] advertising revenues collapsing [and] no means of support". At the BBC, by contrast, strategy is *not* driven by the assumption that consumption is moving inexorably and willingly towards a pay-TV norm. The commitment to universality is taken to mean that the BBC must continue to serve audiences resistant to pay-TV, while encouraging the shift to digital. The BBC's thinking about audiences, and how its portfolio of services can serve them, is broader than C4's.
- Both PSBs must respond to the new markets for programme rights because pay-TV rights to hit US programmes are now often bundled together with free-to-air rights. C4 argues that to remain in the market for hit shows it is necessary to have a pay channel to air them on, thus justifying E4. The BBC, by contrast, argues that there are other solutions to the problem (such as sharing rights with Sky).
- Successful public service programming can have a secondary life on pay-TV or on genre channels. C4 and the BBC respond differently to this. For C4 it offers a commercial opportunity: it is seen as logical for C4 to exploit the secondary rights to its programming on its own pay channels, E4 and FilmFour, rather than continuing to sell them to competitors (Paramount and Sky), which thereby benefit from C4's brand. Similarly, for the BBC new channels are seen as an opportunity to stop the selling of hit programmes to competitors. However, this is not taken to justify launching additional pay-TV services. Rather, secondary viewings will commonly occur on the new free-to-air channels. For example, CBBC executives argue that, where secondary pay rights were often sold to Nickelodeon, one aim of the new children's channels is to enable the BBC to fully exploit its successful children's programmes

on dedicated channels. Merchandising spin-offs and raised brand recognition are additional bonuses, balanced against the loss in rights income.

- Both PSBs have the challenge of securing a prominent position on the Electronic Programme Guide [EPG], which for DSat is a proprietary technology controlled by Sky. In the fragmenting broadcasting ecology, profile is increasingly important. The existence of several C4-branded or BBC-branded channels is seen as a crucial means of capturing more visual space, and therefore consumer attention, on the EPG.
- For the BBC, the new channels can occupy genre categories on the EPG – childrens, entertainment, arts and news. This will allow consumers to identify them by genre *if* consumption moves in that direction, particularly among the young. It will also mix the BBC brand in with its commercial rivals. Importantly for the BBC's 'future-proofing' aims, this is possible even though the channels are now conceived as mixed genre. The strategies of brand recognition, generational renewal, and adapting to the pay-TV economy are clearly linked.

6) Cross-platform and interactive potential:

The new services allow both PSBs to build cross-platform and interactive operations, seen as beneficial elements of a convergent future. The aim is innovation in the delivery of content, but also enhanced cross-promotion between linear and online, free-to-air and pay services – an advantage denied to non-terrestrial competitors. At C4, expanded cross-platform educational output, both commercial and public service, is planned in response to government interest in broadband educational delivery, although the plans saw a 20% cut in late 2001 due to financial difficulties. C4's primary interest in interactive television [iTV] is as a source of new revenues, whether through *Big Brother*-style phoning-in or via gambling linked to *At The Races*. In the BBC, even before government stipulated that interactivity must support its DTV channels, there was limited cross-platform development between television, radio and online. Cross-promotion is well established and aims to build brand recognition without commercial intent. In iTV the BBC is helping to foster competitive innovation, and in broadband it is developing ambitious public-private partnerships, such as a pilot regional initiative in Hull to deliver community and educational services.

7) Technological and platform development:

For both PSBs the new services respond to technological development, new media and platforms. C4 has a selective approach – market research is used to gain insights and focus resources on prevalent platforms and those most suitable for C4's services. Necessary technological development is commissioned from outside software firms. By contrast, BBC new media executives

see the BBC's role not only as responding to but also as helping to drive technological and platform development, and the BBC supports some software development in-house. The corporation feels obliged to develop services for each viable new platform, a costly investment given the speed of change. Its economic security means it can shoulder risks that commerce (and C4) might reluctantly carry, and in iTV it has competed successfully against Sky to develop new standards. The down side is that some BBC new media executives do not discriminate between more and less important platform developments; there is a hint of 'techno-profligacy'.

8) Digital channels as 'R & D' for the main channels:

Both PSBs conceive of the digital channels, in part, as 'R & D' for the terrestrial channels. E4 is seen as the 'R & D lab' for C4, a space for innovation and risks and for 'growing talent'. This is thought to be possible because of E4's high origination budget compared to most digital channels. However E4's Managing Director, formerly with Viacom, saw the relationship between the channels as less clear. In his view pay channels are inevitably risk averse because they must prove reliable to consumers, while risk is the main channel's remit. There is thus a telling ambiguity at C4 as to which channel is properly the place for risk-taking.

BBC strategists also portray the new BBC channels as having an 'R & D' function, BBC3 for BBC1 and BBC4 for BBC2. Programmes and formats developed on them will cross to the mass generalist channels; indeed repeat programming is seen as a means of maintaining terrestrial-level budgets on the digital channels. It will also ensure that, before analogue switch-off, analogue viewers get to see successful digital programmes. Risk and innovation are considered central to BBC3 and BBC4: for BBC3, like E4, because 'risks are inherent in a youth mindset'; for BBC4, because it is a cultural channel. To gain legitimacy BBC3 and BBC4 are expected to achieve an appropriate digital audience share and this may constrain risk-taking, but the constraint is not as great as with pay channels. Just as radio found talent for television, so BBC3 and BBC4 are seen as spaces for talent development for the wider BBC; given the BBC's talent drain, this is a serious challenge.⁶

9) The portfolio approach:

Both PSBs have adopted a 'portfolio approach' to their expanding services. But it is far more developed in the BBC, perhaps naturally given its greater scale. C4's plans do not evidence high-level concern with the complementarity of its channels and services. The BBC's portfolio thinking is more flexible than C4's in relation to changing consumer mores, linked to its greater commitment to universality. The contrast is shown in the broadcasters' different projections of future consumer behaviour.

The BBC is *not* assuming a universal shift from viewing mixed genre to niche channels; nor is it assuming that pay services will become near-universally acceptable. Instead, BBC strategists stress the need not to alienate analogue and free-to-air consumers during the transition to digital. The BBC's 'future-proofing' thus aims to prepare the portfolio for a fully digital world, but without knowing precisely when that will occur, what form it will take, or how consumers will respond. A central BBC aim is to plan the complementarity of its channels. Early in the process the Director of Television floated a reduction of the genre mix on BBC1 and BBC2 (Thompson 2000). Criticism ensued, and Dyke's next speech stressed that they would remain mixed genre, generalist channels, while BBC3 and BBC4 would also be mixed genre, though with a narrower range.⁷ In the transition, the plan is that BBC1 and BBC3 will be linked entertainment channels differentiated by tone and age. BBC1 will be the unifying channel, and will continue with childrens' programming despite the new childrens' channels. BBC2 and BBC4 will also be related and are aimed at the over-35s, with BBC4 utilising links with the cultural and speech networks, Radios 3 and 4.

10) Raising digital television standards:

While both PSBs are committed to original programming on the DTV channels and to raising DTV production budgets, the commitment to raising standards is more obvious in BBC strategies. BBC3 and BBC4 are intended to buck the low budgets for digital and cable: through restricted schedules (6-8 hours a day), and by repeating programmes within each schedule and on the main channels, the aim is to keep budgets close to terrestrial norms. BBC3's annual budget (2002-03) was planned to be £97m, compared to E4's £40m. While this gives an average £35k per hour, using the techniques outlined budgets will range between £40k and £730k p.h., equivalent to the terrestrial range.

Evaluating strategies

Strategy plays an increasingly important part in the management of broadcasting because of the growing complexity of the media ecology and the need for broadcasters to consider and plan the shape of their future market interventions. Comparing the BBC's and C4's DTV strategies elucidates the distinctive strategy discourses that can emanate from PSBs, and particularly the different priorities and projections imminent in those strategies. Both the BBC and C4 have determined their DTV strategies by deploying various forms of expertise, particularly market analysis and market research, which ground collective interpretations, on which is constructed in turn a discursive space of projections of future markets, economic and technological strategies.

At C4 the strategic discourse is predicated on a network of bold, mutually reinforcing projections, about which there is a remarkable unanimity among executives, strategists and marketers. There are four basic kinds of projection. They are, first, the business models for the commercial channels that predict future market structures and earnings, the robustness of which currently seems in question. Second, projections of changing audience expectations, habits and tastes, prominent among them that pay services and niche channels are becoming both acceptable and the norm, and that young people desire above all entertainment programming. Third, projections of wider social and cultural changes, including the conviction that the concept of 'minorities' is no longer socially meaningful, and that the values of PSB have declining salience for British society (Jackson 2000, 2001). And, finally, the projection that in given contemporary and future conditions, commercialism and innovation in media services are, or can be, synonymous. Clearly, this constellation of projections is teleological, forecasting precisely the conditions that justify C4's desired strategic direction.

In reality, under conditions of economic restraint, C4's strategy – developing a commercial operation alongside, and cross-subsidised by, the public service organisation – has been driven by anticipated economic need. The projection has been that future economic trends make this imperative, but also that commercialisation is no bad thing and that it will have no deleterious effect on C4's public service foundations. But even in purely economic terms, this view cannot be sustained. C4's commercial offshoots have so far failed to be profitable, imposing serious financial strain on the main public service channel. Job losses, rationalisation, and the closure in 2002 of C4's internationally renowned film production arm have ensued. But this is not all.

C4's growing commercial orientation has caused organisational schizophrenia, manifest in several planes of division, ambiguity and ideological difference. Such divisions and difference are evident between those working for the public service channel and those managing the new commercial services; between those committed to the concept of PSB and those, including former CE Jackson, for whom it is outdated; and between those concerned with C4's audience universality and those emphasising the need for lucrative demographics. C4's commitment to innovation also seems compromised; a rhetoric of 'innovation' is attached to *Big Brother* and to C4's iTV services (phoning in to vote or bet), where the cultural and technological quality of these developments is dubious.

C4's strategic thinking has been driven not by goals of genuine cultural innovation, of added social value, or of enhancing cultural citizenship. Rather, it has been driven by the search for novel ways to secure funding. These realities, as well as the questionable legitimacy of a PSB using gambling to attract consumers and raise revenue, highlight the gaping lack of regulatory oversight of C4's new directions and of their negative consequences for its public service ethos. In turn, this points to the limits of the 'light touch' regu-

latory framework that has prevailed in Britain since the 1990 Broadcasting Act, and which Ofcom is set to inherit.

By comparison, the BBC's strategic thinking on DTV shows a more subtle and strategically flexible set of projections concerning future markets and changing consumer mores. The new BBC channels are seen as responding to viewing habits as they evolve: executives speak of the need to encourage digital take-up through quality offerings, but not to get ahead of current realities. The BBC's search for free-to-air, universal, mixed-genre PSB solutions to enrich its offering and draw audiences, its technological efforts to develop a set-top box or card for free-to-air digital access, its piloting of an innovative joint venture broadband scheme: these have all been achieved under the BBC's existing form of self-regulation and on the basis of public funding. This confirms the superiority of these foundations at present for the delivery of public service and of government policy objectives.

Of course questions remain. The new BBC channels are said to "embody a new set of contemporary, believable public service values";⁸ but these are not specified and it is not clear that the new thinking is yet in place. Multiculturalism is supposed to be central to the remit of BBC3 and BBC4; but given the BBC's poor record in this area, staff on the new channels have little to say about how such a change in organisational and editorial culture will be delivered. The risk is insufficient commitment to reinventing the BBC's values for contemporary social conditions – a critical challenge for the BBC. There is some incoherence in the complementarity planned between BBC1, BBC2 and BBC4. All three channels are set to serve older age groups and are mixed genre; it is unclear how much they will overlap and what will be distinctive. The public service justification for BBC4 seems inconsistent with other strategic principles: it is essentially a niche cultural channel, far from universal in its appeal, and critics argue that its existence will lead to a reduced commitment to those kinds of programmes on the mass generalist channels – a move counter to the principle of mixed programming, which frees BBC1 to 'dumb down'.

Projection and innovation, time and sedimentation

The study has further implications. Analysis of the socio-economics of technical innovation highlights the tendency of private capital, particularly in conditions of risk and uncertainty such as those that characterise the contemporary media economy, to under-invest in innovative research (Stoneman 1987). I have argued elsewhere that public institutions can play a key role in developing innovative forms of cultural production (Born 1993), and this study points to the BBC's central role in fostering current innovations in DTV. Executives from both C4 and the BBC argued that, given widespread industry nerves due to fear of recession, it is the PSBs whose appropriate role is risk-taking and testing out new broadband and interactive propositions. This

contests the view, common in New Labour public policy, that innovation is likely to arise primarily in the private sector through entrepreneurial networks (Leadbetter 1999).

Relatedly, an argument favoured in public policy (Mulgan 1998) and sociology (Castells 1996) portrays an almost inevitable movement towards distributed and networked organisational forms in innovative sectors of the economy. But this study contests such a view, highlighting the continuing importance of publicly funded, vertically integrated, large and centralised forms of organisation such as the BBC in innovation, as opposed to the distributed, network model of C4.

I return finally to time and projection. Recent social theorists of time have highlighted the co-construction of, and interrelations between, past, present and future, and the role of reflexive knowledge in producing the future. Latour (1999) writes of the 'sedimentary succession of time' in analysing the inter-related constructions of past and present. This is an analysis that should be extended, I suggest, to include present constructions of the future and their *projective* sedimentary effects. Adam (1996) stresses discursive effectivity when writing of the need to embrace reflexively sociology's performative role in social and ethical life. Only rarely, however, has sociology attended to the forceful role of futurist projections in constructing industrial and economic temporality (e.g. Brown et al 2000) and the newly systematic and scientific means – the marketing sciences – by which industrial actors attempt to control the economic future. Expertise interprets current realities and, on that basis, projects and constructs new markets, future economic and technological trends.

This study also highlights the rhetorical underpinnings of constructions of the future. Three modes of projection can be discerned in the broadcasters' strategic rationales: those that are primarily normative or principled in orientation, those that are primarily realist or pragmatic, and those that are primarily reactive or defensive. They may be combined, and switching can occur between them. C4's proposition for E4, for instance, combines normative, realist and defensive projections: that E4 augments the space for innovation; that it is a pragmatic response to the rise of pay-TV and the need to exploit pay-TV rights; and that it is a necessary defence against rivals' predatory moves into C4 branding and programming territories, and against the erosion of young people's identification with PSB.

By becoming the basis for institutional strategies, the projections condition the markets in which the PSBs operate, altering the relative positioning of competitors, restructuring the broadcasting field, delimiting the alternatives available to media audiences, opening up some possibilities and closing down others. There is, of course, nothing inevitable about the dominance of pay TV anticipated by C4, apart from the interested discursive coalition – including neo-liberally-inclined governments and powerful media players wielding great political influence – intent on persuading the European public that it is inevitable.

I have stressed the power of pervasive discourses to bring about the conceptions they promote. The more this coalition claims and enacts that pay-TV is the norm, the more likely this is to become the case. The differences in projections matter; they influence outcomes. And through projections the strategies adopted are legitimised by a short cut that apparently forecloses the unpredictable full circuit of production and consumption. C4's framing of the challenge of DTV is radically different from the BBC's. Where the BBC's DTV projections, supported by increased government funding, take in social and cultural utility, universality and particular minority needs, C4's frame has given priority to financial stability and commercial entrepreneurialism. Of the two, it is C4's discourse that forms part of the currently hegemonic discursive coalition in the UK, predicated on the belief that there is now no need for anything 'outside' commercial broadcasting. When even a PSB adopts such a stance, the ideological climate for PSB is surely perilous.

The analysis presented here indicates the enormous influence of C4's commercial funding and weak regulation on the character of its projections, and how such projections have been accompanied by the mutation and fragmentation of C4's philosophy and organisation. Happily, agency can intervene. Recently the research reported in this paper was fed back to the new CE of C4, Mark Thompson, formerly BBC Director of Television and the architect of the BBC's own digital plans. Thompson acknowledged the analysis given here by calling in his first major speech as CE for a revitalisation of C4's public service remit and for additional public financing if that remit cannot in future be secured by commercial funding alone (Thompson 2002).

The motivated futurist projections of major institutions in leading sectors of the economy such as the convergent media and IT industries have significant power to influence current and future realities. As the results of past projections are cumulatively laid down and sedimented, they become the basis for further projections. Given this power, as one analyst of the role of forecasting has put it, there is a need for an 'ethics of the future' grounded in an awareness of the way the present, and present discourses that emerge ascendant from the struggle for discursive primacy, bear a massive responsibility for delimiting the future (Binde 2000).

More generally, as Osborne (1995: 200) comments in another context, all politics centrally involve "struggles over the experience of time". He lists the salient "questions to which a politics of time would attend", which resonate with this analysis: "How do the practices in which we engage structure and produce, enable and distort, different senses of time and possibility? What kinds of experience of history do they make possible or impede? Whose futures do they ensure?" Since what is at stake in this analysis of how present strategies construct the broadcasting future is the very possibility of a non-commodified public media space in Britain, the heartland of PSB, the questions are grave and urgent.

Notes

1. On the concept of public service broadcasting and its contemporary redefinition, see Born and Prosser 2001.
2. The study, publicly funded by ESRC award no. R000 223524, combined documentary research and 40 interviews with relevant broadcasting and production executives.
3. On the BBC's remit see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/info/BBCcharter/agreement/index.shtml>. On C4's remit as licenced by the ITC, see <http://www.itc.org.uk/>.
4. In mid 2001 26% of British households had DTV. Of these, 68% had DSat, 20% DCab and 12% DTT. By mid 2002, 38% of households had DTV, and of those 65% were DSat (figures from the ITC).
5. From this point on, to avoid confusion, I refer to the public service television channel C4 as 'the main channel', and to 'C4' when referring to the C4 corporation as a whole.
6. Since the 1990s the BBC has had a critical problem of star actors, writers, producers and executives leaving for lucrative jobs in the commercial or independent sectors.
7. On the importance of mixed genre channels to PSB, see Born and Prosser 2001.
8. Quotation from internal document, BBC Television in the Multichannel Environment: Strategy 2001-2004/5, April 2001.

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Outsourcing Core Competencies?

Ari Alm & Gregory Ferrell Lowe

A business-like approach to strategizing and managing public service broadcasting [PSB] is a contemporary necessity. Despite laments and criticisms to the contrary, economic rationality and operational efficiency are demanded by the social context in which PSB operates. When the objective is to revitalise PSB – to redefine and reposition PSB to achieve a flourishing polymedia enterprise (Alm & Lowe, 2001) – the struggle is not survival against but rather thriving within the volatile context of market-driven transformation. As costs increase while employees decrease, a common condition in European PSB, efficiency and productivity become crucial. Political governors and regulatory agencies typically require that contemporary PSB be evaluated more on the basis of company practices than institutional identities.

Although unpopular with many, industrial logic is rational and manageable. It is about means and methods as interdependent elements in the production of goods and services. The logic highlights the vital importance of developing any company's 'core competencies' as the best guarantee of future market performance. For a public broadcasting company, that obviously must include developing competencies in content production. Doing more with less, but all of it at high quality standards, is a complex construct. The degree of self-sufficiency entailed in a particular *capacity* frames the possibility space for producing.

Acknowledging such notions and practices as decisive criteria for valuing the operational worth of the public service remit in practice, this chapter focuses critical attention on the merits of outsourcing production and thereby 'shrinking the machine.' Although entirely justifiable for non-essential applications, for example facility maintenance and transportation services, outsourcing is a slippery slope when applied to the production capacity and capabilities of any company primarily valued on the basis of its content output. The authors focus keenest attention on the Finnish context, using Yleisradio [YLE] as the illustrative case. But what's happening here is by no means unique. The governing dynamics are characteristic throughout Europe, and much of the internal logic at YLE is informed by similar trends at sister PSB

companies including the BBC (UK), SVT (Sweden) and DR (Denmark) (c.f., K  ng-Shankleman, 2000; S  ndergaard, 2002).

As is the case for all PSB companies in northern Europe, at least, YLE is an institution with mandated responsibilities for various cultural and social services. Public service is not simply about ‘products’ – by law and tradition it is about nurturing, supporting and also defending processes of broader significance. In earlier published work related to accomplishing this (Lowe & Alm, 1997), we have discussed the notion that modern PSB companies are organising to become “cultural industries”.

In this chapter we briefly consider three characteristic notions in modern organisational theory: 1) value chains, 2) strategic outsourcing, and 3) core competencies.

The Finnish context

Whenever the private broadcasting sector in Finland experiences serious business difficulties, no matter the cause or who is to blame, public discussion about the mission and capacity of public service broadcasting soon follows. Such is typically very critical towards YLE and dominated by industry CEOs, economists and populist politicians. They gin up the mill and trot out the Trojan Horse: as a publicly funded company (they rarely note that also means a *non-commercial* company), Yleisradio is distorting market dynamics and preventing the ‘fair play’ of competition between market forces (c.f. Pasanen, 2000). This undoubtedly sounds quite familiar to observers of recent EU media policy discourse, as well.

The critique seeks to legitimate claims that the YLE mission should only focus on supplementing the private sector with content and services that are not profitable for commercial operators. Here such claims are typically linked with the ‘itty bitty Finland thesis’ – here we are so small and far away that our private market demands special treatment. This blithely ignores the fact that Finland is a member of the European Union and that here, as elsewhere, private media increasingly features international investment from influential multinational corporations (e.g. NRJ, the Bonnier Group, Disney/Capital Cities, Metromedia, etc).

In a similar vein, the independent content production sector questions PSB’s self-sufficiency, equating this with tenuous claims of isolationism (c.f. Heikkinen et. al, 2001; Picard, 2002). Critics contend that YLE’s public finance resources should not be allocated to maintain the company’s internal production capacity but should instead be ‘channelled’ via YLE straight to the independent purse via contracting media specialists, facilities and content. Actually YLE television already allocates about 2.2 million euros for independent film production annually, and 16 percent of its annual domestic television production is contracted as part of its public service mission to

support Finnish audiovisual culture. That is typically a neglected acknowledgement, as well.

In recent years, the Finnish private media sector has also been shilling for public funds to finance their digitalisation and convergence plans (c.f. Paavola, 2001; *Digitaalinen sisältötuotanto*, 2002). That might be well and good, and isn't in fact opposed by YLE because such would provide a needed boost in building up a digital broadcasting market. But it is ironic because YLE has been required to bear the lion's share of costs to build the new digital infrastructures and launch first generation pilot services – without commercial support or investment. YLE is the sugar-daddy paying the costs to cover the action that will ultimately build new media markets that greatly lower the risks and barriers for commercial entry later, and potentially at taxpayer expense even then.

The good old days

From the mid-1930s through the mid-1980s, YLE's mission was to serve Finnish citizens with public broadcasting services. YLE built Finnish broadcasting from scratch. The same is of course true about PSB companies in most European countries. Little wonder, then, that YLE developed a strongly self-sufficient institutional operation and culture. There wasn't any alternative. The diverse skills and competencies necessary for broadcasting in Finland, first in radio and later television, had to be developed in-house. Of course there were international influences and relationships, but it was a long, costly struggle growing up. This was especially difficult in the historical context, given social conditions and the general economic situation in Finland from the 1930s until the 1990s.

As an institution, YLE was a journalistic- and programme-oriented “auter” organisation. YLE had plentiful resources and was organised into channel-specific program units with quite nearly 100% self-sufficient capacity.

Figure 1. Traditional PSB value chain



Each channel controlled the resources needed to run its operation. YLE professionals were 'resource rich' in a traditional value chain that was quite simple – YLE was an institution making programs for citizens. YLE professionals could largely decide what program contents they wanted to produce, how much of each type they wanted to produce, and how they would produce all of it (Alm, 1992). This system lasted until the end of the 1980s. Again, the overall situation was quite similar throughout northern Europe.

Engineering the cultural industry

In Scandinavia, that long era of relative stability and security for PSB was over by the late 1980s. Commercial broadcasting was licensed everywhere to varying degrees, beginning with local radio and progressively including semi-national and then national radio, as well as television. The 1990s were a watershed period because everything was in transition. Although differing in timetable and scale across the region, the period chronicles the launch of digital radio [DAB] and television [DVB], webcasting and multimedia capabilities, renewals and restructuring in radio and television operations, internal market schemas, downsizing and, by decade's end, the emergence of matrix organisations (more about this later). In the same period, business management overtook institutional management and resources were in decline – partly because reserves were invested in so much digital media development and partly because license fee revenue hasn't matched mandated responsibilities. Of course the broader context was characterised by the popularity of neo-liberal ideology, multinational media consolidation, and the various strains of convergence.

Thus, European PSB managers sought new management tools and practices to more effectively cope with such an unparalleled range of external and internal changes. The BBC has long been an influential model in the region. New designs, theories and methods have often been borrowed or adapted from the UK (c.f. Smith, 1998). That has certainly been evident at YLE.

The business-like approach to management is illustrated in changes that include new management systems, modernisation in cost accounting procedures, increased productivity in program production via streamlining and digitising work processes, outsourcing non-core services, trimming 'excess capacity', and building internal content, skill and resource markets. During the 1990s, YLE critically analysed and re-engineered much of its structure and many of its practices under the rubric of increasing efficiency, productivity, accountability and transparency. This has been necessary because:

- YLE's service portfolio exceeds available financial resources. It has been especially costly to expand traditional analogue broadcasting services while also building new digital services and production infrastructure

- Spiralling costs due to digitalisation and dramatic increases in buyers' markets for programs, formats, genre (especially sports rights)
- Regulatory changes that have slowed resource growth and fuelled private chains and networking

Resource management is by now a top priority on the executive agenda in the first decade of the new century. How is this industrial ethos and economic rationality reflected in YLE's strategic management?

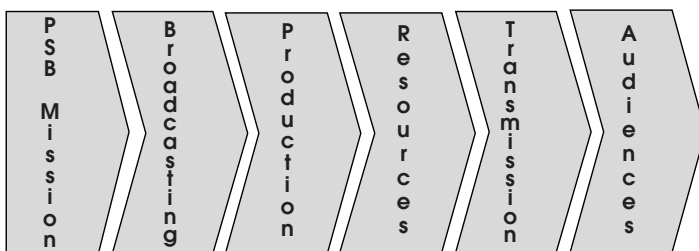
Commissioning and full costing

Contemporary European PSB management applications are based on the separation of "broadcasting" (planning and compiling program portfolios) and "producing" (program projects). Combined with an emerging producer-based manufacturing culture (e.g. 'producer choice'), the dynamic is best understood as the elaboration of two internal marketplaces in modern PSB. These are 1) the "schedule marketplace" and 2) a "resource marketplace".

The PSB corporate centre (i.e. central administration) allocates financial resources to the various channels. In the "schedule marketplace" a channel head then opens competition for programme ideas and potential projects, inviting submissions/proposals from internal and external producers. The aim is to capture the best program ideas and then create efficient program projects. In the resource marketplace, in-house producers then contract with internal as well as external professionals for talent and facilities needed to make the agreed program.

The value chain in this system is increasingly complex because it is multi-dimensional. Although applications vary in design, most European PSB companies utilise approximations of the following for analogue production:

Figure 2. New PSB analogue value chain

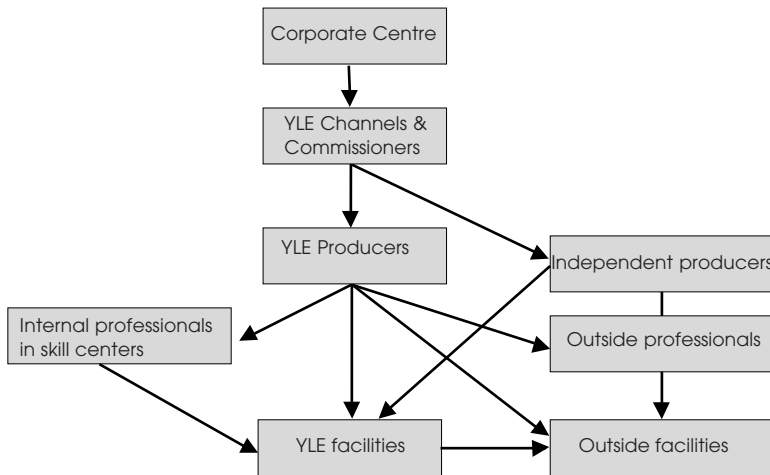


Transformation in management practices indicated by the value chain pictured in Figure 2 is operationally defined at YLE by the concept '*kaaviojohdaminen*' [management by schedule] (Hujanen, 2002). That is the managerial toolbox by which chiefs design and implement program strategies for radio and television channels. The challenge is to balance innovative artistic-journalistic energy against decreasing financial resources. The public service mission is here correlated with 'customer' needs and expectations because the new analogue value chain is focused on constructing *competitive* program schedules.

Of fundamental importance is the process of '*tilauskäytäntö*' [commissioning]. The commissioning system is the operational link between program planning and production implementation. Program projects are commissioned for specific program schedule slots.

"Management by schedule" is correlated with producer choice and full cost accounting via an internal market system. Producers manage the program projects according to agreed objectives and financial resources. Because the producer owns the project budget, editorial and facility capacity is operationally defined by his or her production decisions. The organisational structure can be mapped as in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Decision-making levels in management by Scheduling



YLE's internal competencies, resources and facilities are constantly engaged in price competition and also benchmarked against external rivals. At the same time, self-sufficiency in artistic-journalistic capacity, as well as production resources and facilities, have been reduced and outsourced to varying degrees. Broadcast news production is still seen as a core product, so in this

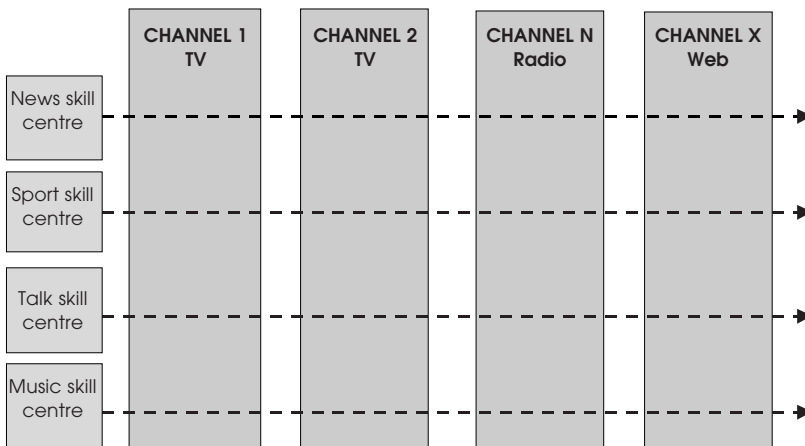
the company remains self-sufficient for the most part. But quiz shows and weekly entertainment shows, for example, are largely outsourced today.

2002 – 2003: The year of the matrix

Although increasing, the volume of outsourcing is actually not as high as initially predicted. This is partly because there aren't as many Finnish external independents with high competence in the various genres of production as anticipated, and also because the growth rate for independent production houses hasn't been brisk – especially since the deepening economic downturn now in its third year globally. Also as noted earlier, YLE essentially built Finnish broadcasting so it shouldn't be surprising that much of the best talent in any particular genre is often employed by YLE.

One pressing problem that dampens the fullest strategic possibilities correlated with owning that strength is that the best professionals in any particular genre tend to be scattered across YLE channels and departments. The monopoly past created a 'silo' work culture that 1) makes collaboration and co-operation iffy and 2) correspondingly accounts for redundancies and duplication. Again, this problem is characteristic in European PSB more broadly. The popular solution is predicated on a 'matrix' design for the organisation (Figure 4 illustrates a generic matrix organisation model).

Figure 4. Generic Sample, Matrix Organisation



YLE television and radio production professionals are increasingly organised into program genre 'competence centres', also referred to as 'skill cen-

tres'. There is a subtle but important distinction. 'Competence' is the measure of skill in execution. Professionals with expertise in broad but particular genre categories are collected into one editorial unit to increase consistency, innovation and synergy. The news skill centre can, for example, produce news programming for all of the channels across media operated by the company. The matrix organisation enables innovation via 'versioning' whereby the same raw content can be variously adapted or configured to create targeted format programming for different channel and media applications, and also efficiency because one or two journalists will suffice at any event (instead of half a dozen or more, each representing one channel).

Although the matrix design may eventually solve a range of long-term problems including, especially, the traditional silo work culture and the need for higher efficiency and also more innovation, it of course creates other potential problems. In this schema, decision-making moves away from those responsible for producing programs to those responsible for programming channels. As a result, journalists for example can be too distant from program planning and producers or editors may be tempted to concentrate overmuch on the 'factory floor'.

Make it or buy it?

Fine and Whitney (1996) stipulate two types of outsourcing dependency. In *capacity dependency* an organisation has the competence and resources to manufacture the product, but because of time or cost savings realises better value in buying from external sources. For instance, YLE's TV News department can outsource a single cameraman for a night shoot because that's a faster and more flexible option than attempting to reorganise the internal department. Similarly, it's often cheaper to buy a programme concept from an independent entrepreneur than to invest the time and money to do that internally, even when it can in fact be done this way.

The second outsourcing type is *knowledge dependency*. This is characteristic when a company needs particular (often narrow) expertise in which the company lacks knowledge or skill. In such cases it is cheaper to buy it than to build it. For instance, the company can buy a weekly political satire program that relies on 3D-computer animation because it lacks the specialised knowledge to do that on its own. Capacity dependency may also play a role because in this case it would also be cheaper to contract a program that relies on specialised IT-tools rather than buying and constantly upgrading the platform needed to do that in-house.

But as Fine and Whitney further observe, organisations learn to utilise and also further develop any manufacturing process they own. Product development in new media content is a relevant example. In the long run, it's more fruitful to build new media infrastructure and systems in-house because

being dependent on external sources for that knowledge and capacity will increase long-term costs and also hobble possibilities for future development of the polymedia enterprise.

These theoretical contrasts can be summarised as two opposing schools of thought about outsourcing, defined in terms of 1) time and 2) money. In the *cost-based outsourcing framework*, short-term transaction costs play the decisive role (Bassett, 1991; Ellis, 1993; Poppo, 1998). For PSB companies, that is characterised by statements such as, “our business is program services, not production processes” or “the program product is what customers buy, not the process to make it”. In the *strategic outsourcing framework*, on the other hand, the view is long-term in recognising that anything a company doesn’t own will never be developed internally. Given the fact that so much is changing, and so rapidly, learning towards mastery is a governing premise for any expert organisation that must remain expert to survive. ‘You learn by trying, not by buying’, so by outsourcing all or even most product manufacturing a company is inherently also depressing the organisation’s capability to learn and develop its processes and products in those areas. This realisation accounts for recent agreement that such is a crucial consideration for the senior management agenda in any company – public or private (Venkatesan, 1992; Fine & Whitney, 1996; McIvor et al, 1997; Greaver II, 1999).

YLE is an expert organisation and highly dependent on its range and depth of media-related knowledge. It is therefore of vital importance for YLE, and sister PSB companies, to maintain that expertise as in-house competencies. This demands internal production capability and capacity. That is not only important for making, and indeed for development in making, but also for contracting external services where appropriate. In the absence of such expertise, one can never be certain what he or she wants to buy, or what he or she is buying.

McIvor, Humphreys and McAleer (1997) postulate three fundamental problems for any organisation dealing with outsourcing:

- *No formal or systematic method for evaluating the outsourcing decision.* Outsourcing is most often done on the short-term cost saving basis. That is treacherous if one hasn’t also taken sufficient account of the needs and ambitions for the organisation’s long term competitiveness.
- *Real costs are not properly measured and evaluated.* Outsourcing decisions are often based on overly optimistic assumptions for cost savings. It’s rare that the most optimistic expectations are actually realised in practice. Qualitative factors including long-term strategic objectives and ‘collateral damage’ in workforce reactions should therefore have a much stronger impact on outsourcing decisions.
- *Neglecting the core competencies.* As signalled above, Hamel and Prahalad (1990; 1994) criticise the cost-based approach to outsourcing strategy because it ironically erodes development in an organisation’s

core competencies. Core competencies are the decisive key to a strong corporate future because they open the gateways for tomorrow's opportunities (see also Quinn 1992).

Public service broadcasting companies cannot survive if they are unable to recognise, develop and utilise the core values that are implemented via operational capability and capacity – the practical ground for competency. Competencies are core when they are necessary for survival, so anything ascertained to be a core competence must be integrated company-wide. Core competencies create those real, meaningful and long-term distinctions that construct the 'brand' a company commands in customer perception; they are fundamental to the enterprise and make disproportionate contributions to customer perceptions of value. The competencies that qualify as 'core' properties are also unique to the organisation concerned and cannot be readily reproduced by competitors. Moreover, it is core when it is extendable – new products and services can be developed on the basis of core mastery. And if it is core, then it is sustainable.

The roots of distinctive core capabilities often extend back to the organisation's founding circumstances, emerging as the various means by which an organisation can fulfil its governing mission. Thus, those competencies that really are 'core' are premised on defining values and the innermost meanings of organisation culture. Stated bluntly, it isn't a core competence if you have to rent it.

All of this implies the importance of 'own production' for contemporary PSB companies. Before addressing that specifically, it's important to understand that outsourcing some proportion of content production is advisable for at least three reasons. Doing so supports the independent audiovisual sector, thereby cultivating new talent and stimulating domestic and regional media development. Secondly, it facilitates cost savings via co-production investment and also correlated reductions in permanent contract personnel needed in-house. Thirdly, it better ensures the PSB company can focus more tightly on production that services the core competencies of the enterprise.

But the criteria determining the proportion best handled via outsourcing are certainly complex. Some genre operationalising core competence can't be outsourced, particularly for example news operations. The daily pace of operational requirements to handle journalistic services quickly and professionally requires a network of highly skilled correspondents, on-premise and remote production facilities, a competent production staff in television and radio, etc. Another factor is related to the nature of targeted audiences. Minorities, for example, are unlikely to be of great interest or sufficient commercial value for a sufficient range of private companies to service them in any robust sense. If exclusively outsourced, the quality of minority-oriented content provision would be compromised. Competence development is yet another factor, as discussed earlier. Anything a company isn't involved in directly producing is inherently something for which the company doesn't

have or develop expertise. These are only three factors to illustrate. There are of course many others that could be discussed as well (e.g., skill centre development, innovation in production processes, competent support and involvement in building digital infrastructure, cross-media development, and expanding regional and local services).

Defying or at least ignoring all of this, some instead suggest a 'disaggregate approach' (see the chapter for Jakubowicz) whereby *all* content would be outsourced and the PSB company would more or less exist only as a kind of administrative shell. This discussion signals the poverty of that concept for long-term domestic media development in content, access and infrastructure. Such an approach would not only fail to guarantee adequate provision of public service programming, but also development of public service values in operational practice.

Core competence and core value

So what are YLE's core competencies? What are the capabilities and knowledge that count as core because they must be continually utilised and also developed in the future? Although the following remarks are framed in relation to YLE, with slight changes they are relevant for any PSB company.

Some think that various program genres or distinctive programs are core competencies. They are not. They can be 'core products' produced by skilled professionals utilising technology and other tools (e.g., conceptual), but they aren't core competencies. Some think program or channel brands are core competencies. They are not. They can be 'product leaders' keyed to market presence and performance, but they are based on actuality rather than capability. One has to dig beneath the organisational surface to identify core competencies because such competencies are capability for *operational enactment of core values* – where the inspiration becomes perspiration.

For YLE, capabilities to comprehensively reflect and support creation in Finnish culture, identities, and feelings of relatedness to different languages or to geographical, cultural or religious reference groups is a core competence – let's call it *Finnish-ness (suomalaisuus)*.

For YLE, capabilities to maintain cultural pluralism and communication diversity that ensure the vitality of living sub-cultures is a core competence. Let's call this *diversity and divergence*. As Hellman (1999) observed, diversity of programs and divergence of program choices are still tightly linked with YLE, especially important in light of turbulence in the contemporary Finnish media market.

For YLE, capabilities to sustain a sense of *security and reliability* is a core competence, also important in a social environment that is increasingly international and frequently unsettled. This has been repeatedly verified by audience research results. YLE is still considered the most reliable media

source in Finland. YLE journalism is understood by Finns to be independent of political, cultural and economic interest groups.

For YLE, *benchmarking quality and professionalism* is a core competence. YLE serves as a benchmark for commercial rivals by establishing professional and industrial standards in various program genres. In doing so, YLE secures a desired quality for broadcasting overall in Finland. Such benchmarking is relevant for both audiences and media professionals. Thus, YLE is the premier developer and creator of Finnish broadcasting competencies and skills.

Finally, YLE has the best and most comprehensive knowledge necessary for developing, elaborating and building the national broadcasting infrastructure and applied technologies needed for digital broadcasting. YLE is the only Finnish media company with mandated societal obligations to invest in both infrastructure and content development needed for digital services in the converging information society, and the only sure guarantee that such will be available for every Finn. For YLE, *universal service* is a core competence.

The outsourcing approach for programs and program-related operations has been mostly based on short-term cost savings. Combined with producer choice and internal market systems, cost-consciousness among YLE employees has increased apace with overall improvements in efficiency and productivity. Organisational structures are leaner and more flexible. But decisions keyed to outsourcing must be understood as fundamentally strategic in nature and implication.

Thus, a far more thorough and systematic analysis of competencies to establish what is actually 'core' is essential. In doing so, it's crucial to remember that a core competence can't be rented – it's only core if the company owns it and competitors can't quickly or cheaply achieve the same conceptual and operational values. Keeping in mind the discussion about YLE's core competencies, and remembering that these are fundamentally linked with core values, if YLE were to surrender or otherwise lose those core competencies it is unlikely such would be recreated elsewhere.

Saving money is important for many reasons today (e.g. legitimacy, productivity, efficiency, quality), but robust support for the public service *approach* and public service *capabilities* is far more important to the future of Finnish social and cultural life. That is why 'own production' capacity is essential rather than tangential; it is a pre-requisite for consistently realising and also developing public service mediation. This discussion underlines the supreme importance of socially conscious media policy.

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PUBLIC ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION
CHALLENGES IN CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION

Is There a Role and Place for Community Media in the Remit?

Nico Carpentier, Rico Lie & Jan Servaes

The debates on a new public remit tend – not surprisingly – to focus on the different aspects of the public broadcasting service. Though legitimate questions originate from this focus, this article shifts the emphasis towards another group of media that can (potentially) play an important public role: community media [CM]. Because of the complexity of CM, which is characterised by the tension between the diversity and the specificity of these organisations, a multi-theoretical approach is used, combining four theoretical frameworks. The combination of these frameworks not only results in a more elaborate analysis of the identity of CM, highlighting the importance and the vulnerability of these CM-organisations, but also allows emphasising the need for a series of remedying strategies. These strategies are not only aimed at improving the position of CM, but are also oriented towards the re-conceptualisation of convergence from a technologically determined articulation to an articulation that centralises the democratic quality of public life.

Defining Community Media

The concept of community media has proven to be, in its long theoretical and empirical tradition¹, highly elusive. The multiplicity of media organisations that carry this name has caused most mono-theoretical approaches to focus on certain characteristics, while ignoring other aspects of the identity of CM. This theoretical problem necessitates the use of different approaches towards the definition of CM, which will allow for a complementary emphasis on different aspects of the identity of CM. This chapter aims to combine four theoretical approaches in order to capture both the diversity and specificity of these CM.

None of the four approaches discussed below can be considered as giving a sufficient overview when applied independently, as we postulate that the only way to capture the diversity that characterises CM is the simultane-

ous application of these four approaches. This does not exclude the interrelationships between the four approaches, especially within the two media-centred approaches and the two society-centred approaches². Differences within these approaches are based on the application of a more essentialist theoretical framework, as opposed to a more relationalist theoretical framework³. These relationships can be summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Positioning the four theoretical approaches

	Media-centred	Society-centred
Autonomous Identity of CM (Essentialist)	Approach I: Serving the community	Approach III: Part of civil society
Identity of CM in relation to other identities (Relationalist)	Approach II: An alternative to mainstream	Approach IV: Rhizome

Implementing these four approaches highlights arguments stressing the importance of CM in a wide range of areas; at the same time, they can (and will) be used to analyse the weaknesses of and threats to CM. After a brief description of each approach, they are then operationalised, directing the analysis of arguments both emphasising the importance of CM and uncovering weaknesses and threats. This analysis will lead to a summarising table containing both sets of arguments.

A promising starting point for this theoretical analysis is given by the ‘working definition’ of community radio adopted by AMARC-Europe, the former European branch of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters⁴; an organisation that encompasses a wide range of radio practices in the different continents. Attempting to avoid a prescriptive definition, AMARC-Europe (1994: 4) labels a community radio station as “a ‘non-profit’ station, currently broadcasting, which offers a service to the community in which it is located, or to which it broadcasts, while promoting the participation of this community in the radio”.

Multi-theoretical approaches

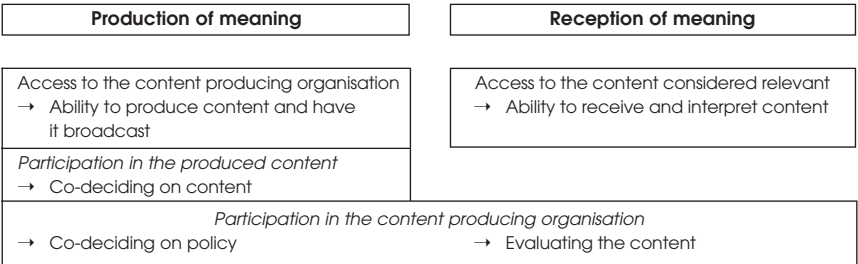
Approach one: Serving a community

In AMARC’s working definition, it is clear that there is a strong emphasis on the concept of ‘community.’ Moreover, the geographical aspect is explicitly highlighted (“in which it is located”), although other types of relationships between medium and community are mentioned (“to which it broadcasts”). As Leunissen (1986) argues, conceptualisations of community refer predomi-

nantly to geography and ethnicity as structuring notions of the collective identity or the group relations. These structural conceptualisations are put firstly into perspective by introducing the concept of the ‘community of interest’, which extends community “across conurbations, nations and continents” (Lewis, 1993: 13). A second type of re-conceptualisation is based upon the emphasis of the symbolic construction of community, where Lindlof’s (1988) concept of ‘interpretative community’ and Cohen’s (1989) ‘community of meaning’ are relevant. Cohen for instance pleads for “a shift away from the structure of community towards a symbolic construction of community and in order to do so, takes culture, rather than structure as point of departure” (Cohen, 1989: 70).

CM are thus oriented towards a community, regardless of its exact nature (defined geographically/spatially or otherwise). The relationship between the community medium and the actual community transcends ‘ordinary’ one-way communication, where “topics are chosen in the same way, by professional communicators, and targeted towards the apparent needs and interests of the audience” (Berrigan, 1979: 7). As illustrated in AMARC’s working definition (especially by the segment stating that CM should be “promoting the participation of this community”), relationships between broadcaster and community are defined by the concept of two-way communication. Access by the community and participation of the community are considered key defining factors. Referring to the 1977 meeting in Belgrade, Berrigan (1979:18) (partially) links access to the reception of information, education, and entertainment considered relevant by/for the community. Others limit access to mass media and see it as “the processes that permit users to provide relatively open and unedited input to the mass media” (Lewis, 1993: 12). Participation is seen here, following Pateman (1972: 71), as a process where the individual members (of a community) have a certain degree of power to influence or determine the outcome of that process. CM not only allow but also facilitate the participation of members of the community in both the produced content and the content producing organization. Both the production- and reception-approaches of access and participation are considered relevant to the definition of CM, and are summarised in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Access and participation of the community



A. The importance of CM in approach one: validating and empowering the community

In this first approach the relationship between the broadcaster and the community is placed in the foreground. By choosing a specific community as a target group, the (concept of) community itself is validated and strengthened. The audience is not defined as an aggregate of individuals who only share socio-demographic or economic characteristics, but instead as a collective of people holding a series of identifying group relations. In this fashion, the situated-ness of the audience, as part of complex set of social structures, is emphasised, deepening and bridging the traditional state-citizen and medium-audience dichotomies that tend to articulate the public and the audience as an aggregate of individuals. Moreover, the aim of CM in approach one to serve the community is often translated as enabling and facilitating access and participation by members of the community. 'Ordinary people'⁵ are given the opportunity to have their voices heard and valued. Societal groups that are misrepresented, disadvantaged, stigmatised, or even repressed can especially benefit from using the channels of communication opened by CM, strengthening their internal identity, manifesting this identity to the outside world, and thus supporting social change and/or development.

B. Threats to CM in approach one: which community?

This orientation towards a community also creates a situation of dependency on this community, as two-way communication requires two partners more or less equally interested in communicating. While the dominant discourse on media is based on one-way communication, raising the community's interest to go beyond this limited form of communication does not speak for itself, due to what can be called the lack of two-way communication skills and interest. This problem is strengthened even more by the diffusion of specific technologies oriented towards one-way communication and the lack of technologies facilitating two-way communication. Moreover, the concept of community has often been reduced to its geographical meaning. This reduction has trapped CM in the position of small-scale local media, gradually de-emphasizing their role towards serving the community and eventually copying commercial media formats in their efforts to survive.

Approach two: CM as an alternative to mainstream media

A second approach to defining CM is based on the concept of alternative media. This concept introduces a distinction between mainstream and alternative media, where alternative media are seen as a supplement to mainstream media. As alternative media are sometimes defined in a negative relationship towards mainstream media, the contingency of this concept

should be emphasised: what is considered 'alternative' at a certain point in time could be defined as mainstream at another point in time. The societal context in which alternative media function is inseparable from the concept of 'alternative media' and serves as a starting point for the definition.

Present day mainstream media are usually considered to be large-scaled and geared towards large, homogeneous (segments of) audiences; state-owned organisations or commercial companies; vertically structured organisations staffed by professionals; and carriers of dominant discourses and representations. Alternative media can take a (or several) opposite position(s) on these matters. Typically they are small-scaled and oriented towards specific communities, possibly disadvantaged groups, respecting their diversity; independent from state and market; horizontally structured, allowing for the facilitation of audience access and participation within the frame of democratisation and multiplicity; and carriers of non-dominant (possibly counter-hegemonic) discourses and representations, stressing the importance of self-representation.

A. The importance of CM in approach two: supplementing, contesting and resisting mainstream media discourse

This second approach defines CM media as an alternative that supplements mainstream media both on organisational and content levels. At the organisational level, the existence of CM shows that media can exist independently from state and market. As the pressure on large-scale mainstream media to become more market-oriented tends to be considerable, CM shows that 'the third way' is still open for media organisations. The same argument can be applied for the (internal) structure of the media organisation, as large-scale mainstream media organisations have a tendency towards a more vertical structure. Again, the more horizontally structured CM show that alternative ways of organisation, and more balanced and/or horizontal structures, remain actual possibilities. On the content level, CM can offer representations and discourses that vary from those originating from the mainstream media. The main reason is keyed to the higher level of participation of different societal groups and communities.

Mainstream media tend to be oriented towards different types of elites, as is the case, for instance, in mainstream news broadcasts favouring government sources, often resulting in what is called structural bias (see McNair, 1998: 75 a.f.). The orientation of CM towards giving voice to various (older and newer) social movements, minorities, and sub/counter-cultures and the emphasis on self-representation, can result in a more diverse content, signifying the multiplicity of societal voices. At the same time, the critical stance towards the production values of the 'professional' working in mainstream media leads to a diversity of formats and genres and creates room for experimentation with content and form. In this fashion, CM can be rightfully seen as a breeding ground for innovation, later often recuperated by mainstream media.

B. Threats to CM in approach two: from alternative to marginal?

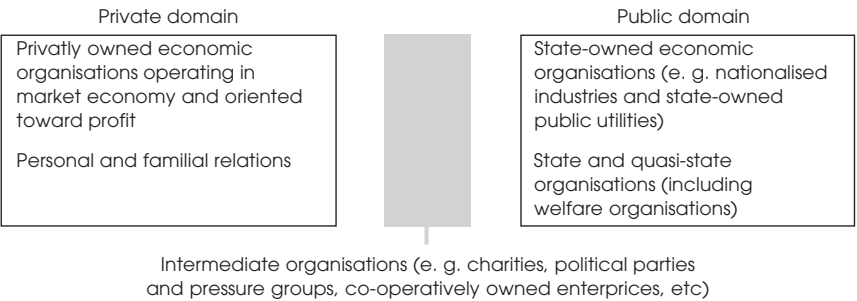
When CM are situated in an antagonistic relationship towards mainstream media, CM may find themselves in a less advantageous position. Being small-scale, independent, and horizontally structured organisations that carry non-dominant discourses and representations, hardly guarantees financial and organisational stability. This is especially pertinent when the antagonistic relationship between public and commercial media is placed in the context of competition, and these media try to hegemonise their identities at the expense of CM. In such cases, CM are articulated as unprofessional, inefficient, limited in their capacity to reach large audiences and as marginal as some of the societal groups to whom they try to give voice. In this fashion, the need for an alternative is denied, as mainstream media are deemed to cover all functions considered relevant to society. One of the main consequences of marginalising the alternative (or connotating it negatively, for instance as naïve, irrelevant or superfluous) is the low political priority given to what is considered to be 'marginal', causing a downward spiral for CM.

Approach three: Linking CM to the civil society

The explicit positioning of CM as independent from state and market supports the articulation of CM as part of civil society. Through this definition, these media can be considered the "third voice" (Servaes, 1999: 260) between state media and private commercial media. A starting point for defining CM as (part of) civil society can be found in Thompson's model describing the public and private domains in contemporary Western societies, where organisations related to the state are seen as constituting the public domain. Privately owned economic organisations geared towards profit, and also personal and family relations, are considered to be part of the private domain. Based on this distinction, civil society can be defined as a group of intermediate organisations, separate from the privately owned economic organisations operating in the market economy, personal and family relations⁶ and from the state and quasi-state organisations. Figure 3⁷ shows the positioning of civil society in between the private and public domain. Although the nature and structure of civil society varies across regions and continents, this Western-inspired model tends to be applicable in most continents, as the neo-liberal market economy has become the predominant form of organising society⁸.

When reworking Thompson's model for the specificity of media organisations, a series of changes should be implemented to the model. Media deregulation, or more generally the impact of the neo-liberal discourse on media policies, has prompted public broadcasting organisations (in some continents) to adopt more market- and efficiency-driven approaches. This includes an increased emphasis on audience maximisation (c.f., Ang, 1991),

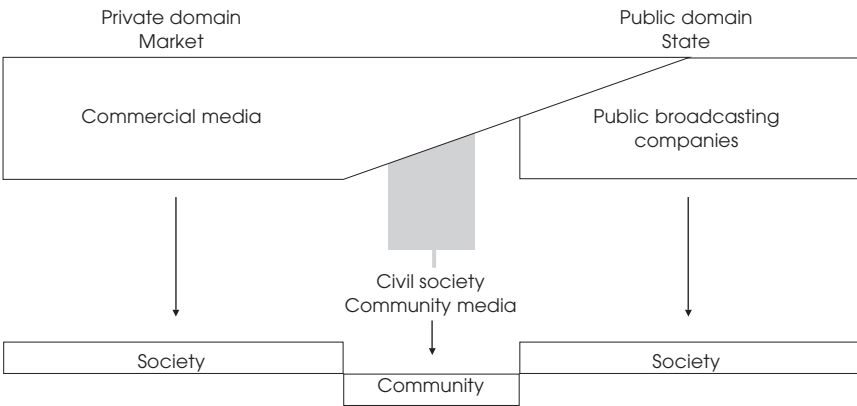
Figure 3. Private and public domains in contemporary Western societies



Source: Thompson, 1995: 122.

thus orienting these broadcasting companies' efforts (even) more towards the societal level, and less to the community level. The reworked model in Figure 4 also shows how this reorientation has allowed the market-driven approach to penetrate the public domain.

Figure 4. Media, market and state



Based on: Thompson, 1995: 122.

A. The importance of CM in approach three: deepening democracy
The third approach defines CM as part of civil society, a societal segment considered crucial for the viability of democracy. Although the nature of civil society can vary extensively across nations and continents, it is argued here that, following Cohen and Arrato (1992: vii-viii), this concept is relevant to most types of contemporary societies and can be seen as an important locus for the expansion or deepening of democracy by means of increasing the

level of participation (see Held, 1987). CM can firstly be seen as an 'ordinary' part of civil society, as one of the many types of organisations that are active in the field of civil society. The democratisation *of* media, as Wasko and Mosco (1992: 7) call this, allows citizens to be active in one of many (micro)spheres relevant to daily life and to exert their rights to communicate.

Secondly, as different political philosophers (from Rousseau, J.S. Mill and Wollstonecraft onwards) have pointed out, these forms of micro-participation are to be considered important because they allow people to learn and adopt democratic and/or civic attitudes, thus strengthening (the possible forms) of macro-participation. When the specificity of broadcasters and their potential role as (one of the) major public sphere(s) is brought into focus and CM are not defined as just 'ordinary' parts of civil society, these media become important because they contribute to what Wasko and Mosco (1992: 13) call the democratisation *through* media. CM offers different societal groups and communities the opportunity for extensive participation in public debate and for self-representation in the (or a) public sphere, thus entering the realm of enabling and facilitating macro-participation.

B. Threats to CM in approach three: a viable civil society?

This approach also allows a foregrounding of the struggle between CM (as part of civil society), the state and the market. Commercial (and public) media tend to see CM as "contenders in a Darwinistic struggle among commercially oriented media" (Prehn, 1992: 266). The rejection of advertising as a prime source of income by CM places them in a financially hazardous situation, sometimes making them limp from one financial crisis to another. The situation for CM becomes even worse when they (as part of civil society) are considered to be a threat to a repressive state. The objectives of CM can cause some state apparatus to interfere, placing staff in sometimes life-threatening situations. When focusing on the internal functioning of CM, it should be emphasised that "making democracy work", to quote the title of one of Putnam's (1993) main publications, is a very difficult task that needs constant attention. Organisations that are horizontally structured and oriented towards community participation have to deal with a certain degree of inefficiency, sometimes making their functioning and the realisation of their objectives impossible or perverting these objectives.

Approach four: CM as rhizome

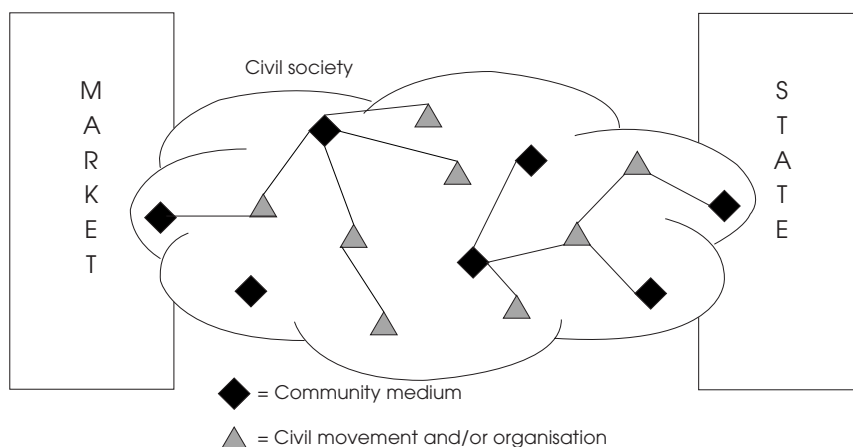
Although the civil society approach defines CM in (a negative) relation to the state and market, this theoretical position remains often based on the autonomous identity of the different actors. In many cases it tends to ignore the contingency and interdependency of these identities⁹. For this reason the

relationist elements that are present in the civil society approach are combined with some of the critical approaches of CM as alternative media – elaborated by Downing (2000) and Rodriguez (2001) – and furthermore radicalised and unified by building on Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the rhizome (1987).

This theory is based on the juxtaposition of rhizomatic and arborescent thinking¹⁰. The arborescent is linear, hierarchic and sedentary, and could be represented as “the tree-like structure of genealogy, branches that continue to subdivide into smaller and lesser categories” (Wray, 1998: 3). It is, according to Deleuze and Guattari, the philosophy of the State. On the other hand, the rhizomatic is non-linear, anarchic and nomadic. “Unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point...” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 19). The image of the rhizome allows incorporating the high level of contingency that characterises CM. Both their embedded-ness in a fluid civil society (as part of a larger network) and their antagonistic relationship towards the state and the market (as ‘alternative’ to mainstream public and commercial media) make the identity of CM highly elusive. In this approach it is argued that this elusiveness and contingency, as is the case for a rhizome, forms its main defining element.

As rhizomes, CM tend to cut across borders and build linkages between pre-existing gaps: “a rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences and social struggles” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 7). In the case of CM, these connections apply not only to the pivotal role CM (can) play in civil society, but also to the linkages CM (and other civil organisations) can establish with (segments of) the state and the market, without losing their proper identity. In this sense, CM do not operate completely outside the

Figure 5. Civil society and community media as rhizome



market and/or the state, although the identity of CM is simultaneously defined in an antagonistic relationship (as being an alternative to the mainstream) towards the market and the state. Moreover, CM are (through their existence) potentially destabilising ('deterritorialising' in Deleuze and Guattari's theory) the rigidities and certainties of public and commercial media organisations, allowing the more fluid aspects of these organisations to surface.

A. The importance of CM in approach four: connecting civil society

This fourth approach builds on and extends the importance that is attributed to civil society and (in relation to) democracy. In contrast to the third approach, the main emphasis for describing the importance of CM is not their role as part of the public sphere, but the catalysing role they can play by functioning as the crossroads where people from different types of movements and struggles meet and collaborate, such as people from different women's, peasants', students', and/or anti-racist movements. In this fashion CM not only function as an instrument giving voice to a group of people related to a specific issue (and/or), but also can function as a catalyzator, grouping people already active in different types of struggle for equality (or other issues). Especially in the field of radical democratic theory, ample emphasis is attributed to the necessity for linking diverse democratic struggles in order to allow the "common articulation of, for example, antiracism, antisexism and anticapitalism", as one of the proponents puts it (Mouffe, 1997: 18). She continues by stressing the need to establish an equivalence between these different struggles, as it is not considered sufficient to establish "a mere alliance" (Mouffe, 1997: 19) but deemed necessary to modify "the very identity of these struggles...in order that the defence of workers' interests is not pursued at the cost of the rights of women, immigrants or consumers" (Mouffe, 1997: 19).

The approach of CM as rhizomatic also makes it possible to highlight the fluidity and contingency of (community) media organisations, in contrast to the rigid ways mainstream public and commercial media often (have to) function. Because of the elusive identity of CM, they can – by their mere existence and functioning – question and destabilise the rigidities and certainties of public and commercial media organisations. At the same time, this elusiveness makes CM (as a whole) hard to control and to encapsulate in legislation, thus guaranteeing their independence.

B. Threats to CM in approach four: diverging interests and the lack of a clear 'common ground'

This fourth approach allows us to consider additional threats to the existence and functioning of CM. It is possible that its potential role at the crossroads of different social movements is simply not realised when CM-organisations, for instance, choose an isolationist position or propagate one overpowering type of social struggle. Moreover, this role can also endanger these

organisations when the objectives of (one of) these movements conflict with the objectives of the broadcaster itself, and when the independence vis-à-vis these movements and/or civil organisations might be threatened. Further, the complex relationship with state and market organisations creates the risk of incorporation of the CM by these state and market organisations and/or the loss of their independence, for instance financial. The approach of CM as rhizome uncovers a fourth potential threat to the existence of CM: these media signify the fluidity and contingency of media organisations, in contrast to the rigidities and certainties of public and commercial media organisations. This very elusiveness might prevent the existence of a 'common ground' on which policy may act. This lack of a clear 'common ground', unifying and structuring CM as such, complicates the functioning of the organisations representing CM (such as, for instance, AMARC) and has prevented the emergence of a well-defined CM-movement.

The four approaches and the deduced arguments showing the importance and weaknesses of CM are summarised in Figure 6. This overview articulates CM as an important but vulnerable type of media organisation.

Strategies for change

In the final part of this chapter, we focus on a series of possible strategies to improve the situation of CM, taking into account both the diversity and the specificity of CM. We suggest two types of strategies. The first group of strategies is aimed towards strengthening the niches CM often are located in, being caught in the uneasy position between market and state. The second group of strategies focuses more at the societal context in which CM function: by enlarging the network (or rhizome) CM are part of, their democratic function within civil society can be realised to a higher degree.

Strengthening the niches

In order to improve the position of their CM, several countries have established media funds, specifically oriented towards direct project funding¹¹, privileging CM. These (community) media funds could also function on a more transnational level, allowing CM from a specific continent or different continents to apply for direct project subsidies. A second point of attention is the quality of legislation and its enforcement in different countries and continents. This legislation should not be limited to the protection of human rights (in their widest sense), but needs to recognise the specificity and difference of CM on technical, organisational and content-related levels, at the same time allowing for the establishment of strategic alliances with public mainstream media.

Figure 6. Summarising the four theoretical approaches

Approaches to community media	1	2	3	4
	Serving a community	Community media as an alternative to mainstream media	Linking community media to the civil society	Community media as rhizome
Importance of community media	• Validating and strengthening the community • Treating the audience as situated in a community • Enabling and facilitating access and participation by members of that community • Topics that are considered relevant for the community can be discussed by members of that community • Opening a channel of communication for misrepresented, stigmatised or repressed societal groups	• CM show that 'the third way' is still open for media organisations • Alternative ways of organisation, and more balanced and/or horizontal structures remain an actual possibility • CM can offer representations and discourses that vary from those originating from mainstream media • Emphasis on self-representation, resulting in a multiplicity of societal voices • Diversity of formats and genres – room for experiments	• Importance of civil society (as such) for democracy, with CM as part of civil society • Democratisation of media in relation to micro- & macro-participation • Democratisation through media: extensive participation in public debate and opportunities for self-representation in the (or a) public sphere	• CM as the crossroads where people from different types of movements and struggles meet and collaborate • Deepening democracy by linking diverse democratic struggles • Highlighting the fluidity and contingency of media organisations • Questioning and destabilising the rigidities and certainties of public and commercial media organisations, making at the same time room for collaboration and partnerships • Elusiveness makes CM (as a whole) hard to control and to encapsulate – guaranteeing their independence

Threats to Community media	• Dependency towards the community • Raising the community's interest for two way communication when the dominant media discourse is based on one way communication • Lack of two-way communication skills and interest • Lack of technology facilitating two-way communication • Reduction of community to its geographical meaning, trapping CM in the position of small-scale local media, gradually de-emphasising their role towards serving the community	• Lack of financial and organisational stability, being small-scale, independent and horizontally structured organisations • Articulated as unprofessional, inefficient, limited in their capacity to reach large audiences and as marginal groups they try to give voice to the 'marginal'	• CM as contenders among commercially oriented media • Rejection of advertising as a prime source of income leads to financially hazardous situations • Dangers caused by a repressive state • Dealing with a certain degree of inefficiency • Making democracy work requires constant attention	• Not realising its role as crossroads • Diverging or conflicting objectives with civic organisations, threatening the medium's independence towards these organisations • Incorporation by state and market organisations, loss of independence towards these organisations • Lack of a clear 'common ground' leading to lack of policy efforts, complicating the functioning of representative organisations and preventing the emergence of a well-defined CM-movement
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Enlarging the network/rhizome

At the same time, policies could be oriented towards the important role CM can play for maintaining, and deepening the level of democratisation. This democratic function is especially related to their role as a nodal point in the network of civil society. The first step in improving the strength of the rhizome is improving the network between the different CM themselves, an aim that could be realised by the structural (financial) support for the representative national and international organisations of CM. This could allow these representative organisations (among others) to increase the number of 'regional offices', to organise the exchange of programmes, and the ability to exchange CM staff. In these ways, the contacts between CM collaborators from different countries and/or continents might be established, thus stimulating organisational learning and networking. Furthermore, the number of connections between CM and non-media civil organisations should be increased. Project funding specifically aimed at the collaboration between media and non-media organisations should be given priority. Exchange programmes and other contacts between the staff – working on compatible issues – of these different organisations should be stimulated. In this fashion, the opportunities for partnerships between media and non-media organisations are increased and the media-centrality that still (sometimes partially) characterises most media organisations would be diminished.

Finally, the importance of the connections between public (and other) mainstream media and CM should be stressed. The rhizomatic approach allows breaking through the rigid separations that are created by the antagonistic position towards mainstream media (approach II) and towards the market and the state as such (approach III). This fourth approach especially creates more room for collaboration with public mainstream media, which would be beneficial for both parties if carried out with the utmost respect for the identities of the actors involved.

The establishment of partnerships between public broadcasters and CM would firstly strengthen the rather problematic, vulnerable and isolated position of CM, allowing them to function on a larger scale. These partnerships would also enable public broadcasters to stretch beyond their own limitations, as the resulting (financial and/or organisational) support for CM contributes to the realisation of some of the public remit's objectives that have shown extremely difficult to realise when tackled in a non-collaborative fashion. These strategic alliances would thirdly offer public broadcasters a unique form of organisational learning, enabling them to be confronted with a wide range of practices that are closely related to the public remit and that public broadcasters have in many cases failed to incorporate in their own functioning. The achievements and limitations of CM in relation to facilitating and realising access, participation, self-representation, self-management, community, diversity, pluralism and democracy ought to be considered a knowledge reservoir that can and should be accessed by public broadcasters.

These different strategies, when implemented with the utmost respect for diversity and specificity, can allow CM to remain in a position where they can (continue to) serve their communities, act as an alternative to mainstream media (discourse), push for democratisation in and through media, and function as a crossroads of civil society.

Notes

1. See for instance Janowitz' work on the community press, which was first published in 1952.
2. The object of this article – community media – of course complicates an unequivocal society-centred approach. In stead this type of approach should be interpreted as the societal contextualization of (community) media.
3. This implies that in approaches one and three, the identity of community media is defined as autonomous, while in approaches two and four this identity is defined in relationship to other identities.
4. The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters is usually referred to by its French acronym AMARC, or the 'Association Mondiale des Radio diffuseurs Communautaires'. The AMARC website can be found at: <http://www.amarc.org>.
5. In other words: people who are not part of a societal elite (including politicians, experts, and media professionals) and those not considered celebrities.
6. When defining civil society, Cohen and Arrato (1992: ix) explicitly include what they call the intimate sphere. The exact nature of civil society, and the question of which spheres to include is beyond the objectives of this text.
7. Graph 3 is a replica of Thompson's (1995: 122) model on public and private domains. Graph 4 is based on Graph 3, but has been thoroughly reworked.
8. Even in societies where the public domain is to be considered repressive towards civil society, different forms of what Lewis (1993: 127) named '*pockets of resistance*' emerge, as could well be illustrated by the existence of the Samizdat in the former U.S.S.R.
9. An example of the theorisation of the civil society-state interdependency can be found in the work of Walzer (1998: 138), when he articulates his paradoxical civil society argument: '...the state is unlike all the other associations. It both frames civil society and occupies space within it. It fixes the boundary conditions and the basic rules of all associational activity (including political activity). He later continues with a much quoted and contested sentence: 'Only a democratic state can create a democratic civil society; only a democratic society can sustain a democratic state.' (Walzer, 1998: 140)
10. Deleuze and Guattari have developed a theory that is situated within the field of epistemology. Here we focus more on organisational structures that are seen as the sedimentation of the arbolescent and/or rhizomatic ways of thinking.
11. Examples are the French 'Fonds de soutien à l'expression radiophonique' and the South-Belgian 'Fonds d'aide à la création radiophonique', that redistribute a taxation on advertising revenues for audiovisual media. Both can be translated as support funds for the radiophonic expression or creation.

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From Service to Access

Re-conceiving Public Television's Role in the New Media Era

Hal Himmelstein & Minna Aslama

Discourses on the new media era tend to celebrate the interactive, emancipatory, participatory and communal characteristics of newer communication technologies. In this chapter the authors examine these discourses from the perspective of two co-existing models of communication: the traditional public broadcasting Trickle-Down service model and the grassroots Bubble-Up community communications model, exemplified in this treatment by public access cable television typical to the United States. The models are herein applied to the mature television medium within the ideological context of public service. Both models provide useful contrasts with the consumerist model of the global information society premised on free-trade principles and rhetorically touted by neo-liberals as the true expression of the 'free marketplace of ideas.' In the authors' view, this mercantilist perspective is a technopian vision of rationalized consumption camouflaged in a socio-political rubric of worldwide direct democracy transcending the borders of the nation-state (perceived in the neo-liberal model as anachronistic).

The authors suggest that the social, cultural and political role of public television can be emphasized and re-validated, specifically regarding participation (human agency), as a counter-balance to neo-liberal consumerist thinking. We also argue that public television can gain a competitive advantage by first advocating *and then proactively creating* a unique blend of public service programming. That blend would emphasize national cohesion combined with grassroots individual and collective access via the promulgation of and, more importantly, non-interference with independently produced adventurous (i.e., critical) texts.

The authors accordingly stress that the current rhetoric of convergence in the context of television – whether in reference to ownership, technology or content (c.f., Murdock 2000) – must move beyond policy statements and academic speculations. It should focus on the domain of praxis by melding the traditional European public service broadcasting mission of public service with an adaptation of the U.S. tradition of public access.

Public service besieged

The social and cultural role of public service broadcasting has traditionally been defined as representing cultural diversity within the society being served. This practical function hinges on making available a plurality of content that permits audiences to be and to act as citizens in a democracy. It also means providing universal availability of information, education, and entertainment to all residents of a nation or, in some cases, regions within the nation.

Lofty ambitions notwithstanding, the audience for European public service broadcasting has declined in many nations to around a 40% share of television viewers. In the U.S. public television viewing has historically never risen much above its current level of a 3% share in prime time. The commercial broadcasting model, dominant from the outset in the United States, has increasingly begun to hold sway in mixed-system nations, particularly in Europe. The American model brings in its wake the culture of celebrity and seduction – the ‘authority of numbers’ of watchers, listeners, and readers (Bauman, 2001: 66-67).

Many critics increasingly look to a variety of ‘new media’ communicative forms as potential counter-responses to the perceived loss of diversity in representations and political viewpoints which, they argue, is a direct result of public television’s decline. Undoubtedly new media technologies such as the Internet provide a distribution channel by which new modes of global social interconnectedness and celebration of diversity may be explored. But questions are raised as to whether control of these technologies by commercial enterprises with vested interests in promoting additional avenues of commodification of culture are instead contributing to the further disappearance of the shared public realm within which the ideal citizen is constituted (Brown, 1994: 37).

The commercial broadcast model, with its drive to market goods to consumers and its technical infrastructure emphasizing one-way flow maximization, has increasingly taken hold of the Internet. One can therefore legitimately question whether the Net can even maintain a semblance of an open, interactive user-based information sending and retrieval system – the dream of the socially progressive proponents at its birth. If it ultimately fails in this regard, what institutional regime, if any, shall assume this role?

As Ellis (2000: 176-77) has noted, the core aspect of broadcast television has historically been “to provide a voluntary point of social cohesion, of being together while being apart”. Ellis calls this ‘working through’. It is “a collective process of making sense of the modern world that uses the linearity of the broadcast medium” which, in turn, depends on the universal availability of public broadcasting services as “guardians of an open process through which social cohesion can be negotiated”. This can be contrasted, in Ellis’s view, with “most of the models of interactivity and choice [that] imply a lone consumer making choices in isolation”. Ellis calls for a new definition of public service broadcasting in the ‘Era of Plenty’ because it can no longer conceive

itself as an institution that imposes consensus but, rather, it must work through new possibilities for consensus by exploring diversity.

Can public service broadcasters, in rethinking their mission, take advantage of both the interactive technological potential of the new media technologies and the alternative communications potential of 'old' electronic media such as public access cable television in the United States? And in this way, can they broaden the scope of their remit beyond the traditional one-way Trickle-Down model of a national service predicated on what Preston (2001: 244) has termed 'Civic National' ideology?

Existing models

According to Preston's conceptualization of the existing discourses on public communication and participation, Civic National ideology (herein characterized as the Trickle-Down communication model of national service) has been the cornerstone of the European public service broadcasting tradition (c.f., Nieminen 2000). This ideology emphasizes the role of a communication community as a national entity consisting of rational-critical citizens. The media function as information providers for debate and discussion and thus are major contributors to the formation of a public sphere.

Proponents and defenders of the Civic National, Trickle Down communication model argue that public service broadcasting must remain steadfast in its national role as a public sphere institution, maintaining its autonomy from both the State and the market. This, it is argued, is the only way to foster a 'third social space' where citizens coalesce to "critically debate issues ranging from public policy to group needs and identities" (Jakubowicz, 1998: 12). Ideally, in practice, public discourse trickles-down as the country's public service broadcaster supports independent producers in the spheres of artistic, cultural, educational and other production by buying their services or using their work, thereby also contributing to their financing and preservation (Jakubowicz, 1998: 17). This model is by definition *centrist*, implying institutional control of communication and presuming the wisdom of the 'professional and democratic gatekeeper' entrusted with the decision-taking authority to determine the needs of the citizenry. This is deemed especially important during periods of social conflict "when many more people and organizations than usual want to [voice] their views on the issues" (Jakubowicz, 1998: 30).

Evidence from U.S. public broadcasting stations over the past decade clearly points to a trend in which station producers assume editorial control of the work of independent producers from the outset. That is often undertaken to appease the presumed or actual desires of grant-funding organizations or commercial underwriters who exert indirect (and increasingly direct) influence over content. To the extent that U.S. public broadcasting

experience can be viewed as a harbinger of the emerging confrontation between commissioning and distributing institutions and independent producers (who are institutionally conceived as 'low-overhead' creative workers), legitimate concerns arise as to the future status of independent creative output in Europe's increasingly competitive mixed-system environments.

Critics of the Trickle-Down model that so emphasizes Civic National ideology propose replacing this with a discourse that Preston (2001: 244) has defined as "Affective National/Postmodernist Cultural". This model emphasizes a local as well as a national communication community comprised of multiple (and frequently contentious) political, cultural and ethnic identities and voices. We might more simply call this the Community Communications Bubble-Up model. Such a communication community would feature 'local' service emphasizing, on the one hand, both individual and collective identity and, on the other hand, active participation/human agency. This alternative conceptualization assumes that citizens have *rights* to the greatest possible diversity of personal and social experience, and to knowledge and participation. In a democracy citizens *must* be allowed to speak of their own lives in their own voices. That requires access to the means to communicate their experiences through public communications media *without institutional intervention or gatekeeping*. This would certainly include individual symbolic universes, i.e., "multiple, unique and potentially unshared private worlds based on various interests or idiosyncrasies" (Firestone, 1994: 5).

This Community Communications Bubble-Up model can be observed in the 30-year history of U.S. public access cable television¹. It also operates in the public arena of the streets via unsanctioned (by officials) artistic production presented on outdoor billboards, phone booths, printed poster displays in metro stations and at bus stops, and temporary site installations on traffic islands, vacant lots, the sides of buildings, kiosks, and storefront video displays. Finally, it has established a global presence through the new media distribution technology of the Internet. The chaos of this multiplicity of 'unique and potentially unshared' voices (unfettered from dominant cultural institutional screens) that Brown conceives as entropic may in fact be emblematic of *democracy in its purest political (i.e., non-consumerist) form*.

While Nordic and other European public service broadcasters have made numerous attempts during the past decades to create a more participatory audience involvement, on balance such attempts have remained relatively isolated incidents in the political, organizational and professional ideological climate of the Civic National, Trickle Down model. At the beginning of the new millennium it is already evident that the changes of the past decade in the European television landscape not only manifest themselves, for instance, in the convergence of various media forms and technologies, but also in an ideological climate. On the one hand this climate allows deregulation and such radically altered policy rhetoric as the European Union (EU) definition of media audiences as 'sovereign consumers' (Pauwels 1999). On the other hand, it celebrates the notion of access to new media, as in the Infor-

mation Society Program of the Government of Finland. At the same time the growing use of 'low-tech' video equipment by professionals as well as 'ordinary people' has, it is argued, begun to alter both the aesthetic and thematic conventions of television (c.f., Fiske 1993; Aslama 2002).

Thus, in this new climate, electronic mass communication should ideally be able to reconcile the two non-consumerist models by establishing both a technological infrastructure and an institutional policy framework that accommodates the strengths of each model and allows independent producers greater control of both content and distribution venues. The authors believe that public service broadcasting must be a primary institutional player in elaborating such a regime.

The role of community in the new media milieu

Graphic communication tools such as affordable video camcorders, video post-production workstations, and user-friendly multimedia web page design software of increasing sophistication have entered into use by a wide public outside the traditional cultural communities. They are, in turn, changing the image cultures in which they exist. "A new populist circulation of images with disregard for 'high culture' has arisen through...exhibitions on the Internet, and through new distribution routes. This vernacular phenomenon [is] opposed to more elite forms of representation...their fresh aesthetic is based on simple graphic applications and a populist imagination" (Lovejoy, 1997: 260).

This new populist circulation of images exists within what Lull (2001) terms the 'superculture' – a fusion of universal values, international services, nations, regions, and practices of everyday life. According to Lull, "[P]eople today routinely fuse the near with the far, the traditional with the new, and the relatively unmediated with the multimediated" (2001: 133). Lull's emphasis on the 'super' rhetoric of the global on the one hand, and of the individual or local on the other, offers one timely and useful way to view the different levels of culture which seem to be present and shared *to a degree at least in high-income societies*. The manner in which Lull presents the construct, however, suggests a certain de-emphasis of the everyday practices of the national and communal by celebrating technology and the individual. He writes, for example, "the crystal-clear technical quality of digital audio and video actually enhances emotionality by purifying the desired information to a level that greatly exceeds the acoustical expectations of unmediated, interpersonal exchanges of sentiment" (Lull, 2001: 159).

While new media "technological tools are capable of...communicating and exchanging ideas and information far afield" (Lovejoy, 1997: 257), this does not (and should not) be read as an immanent and transcendent technological fix. National boundaries, and the national social and cultural configura-

tions they encapsulate, while admittedly under assault from commodified global culture are, at least for the foreseeable future, not likely to disappear. And 'local' cultures in the form of geo-historical communities, ranging from the small town to the big city neighborhood, remain to varying degrees vital integrative forces that help to maintain social equilibrium by emphasizing direct 'acoustical' human contact amongst their inhabitants.

Of course attempts to define *community* have generated a vast literature. The authors choose to focus herein on two most relevant intersecting constructs: 1) community as geo-historical entity and 2) community of interest. The first construct recognizes the need to be grounded in a place defined by intimacy in face-to-face social contact and associated with shared (and disputed) social/cultural memory, both of which ultimately connect to common concerns that directly impact peoples' daily lives. The second construct recognizes the need to seek out like-minded individuals and groups who constitute communities of interest preoccupied with concerns that often transcend the specifics of distinct milieus defined by locality. For the purposes of this essay, the two roughly correspond to 1) electronic community communications media such as public access cable television and local radio, and 2) traditional national public service and commercial broadcasters and the Internet.

The 'traditional community' as epitomized by small town rural formations, and also certain urban and suburban neighborhoods that are segregated de facto by ethnicity, race, or income, may be conceived as a sociocultural entity characterized as a self-contained structured society. The individual is embedded to such an extent that a full life can only be lived as a corollary to full membership in the community. Such a conception implies a total identification embracing both space (generally the smaller the space, the more likely the individual's embeddedness) and time (real time and *Urzeit* or primeval time/origin identified with 'the' past, a time not measurably related to the present). Also key in determining an individual's embeddedness is the extent and degree of institutionalization, tending toward maximal purposiveness *vis-a-vis* integration of the individual into the sociocultural framework. This so-called "prime society" is a complete cultural, political, economic, religious and social entity characterized by an inherent distrust of the 'Other' – of outsiders who threaten cohesion (van Nieuwenhuize, 1966: 18-31). This definition, by extrapolation, applies to both contemporary cults and fascistic national formations.

Attempts to preserve the integrity of the prime society are often seen in what historian C. Vann Woodward terms 'the democratization of nostalgia.' This entails the ennobling of certain aspects of the past to "enhance...lineage, pedigree, national pride, or status" and the denigration of other aspects to "dismiss a shameful heritage" (1989: viii). In marked contrast to this conception of the inherently conservative (and in extreme instances, reactionary) milieu of the traditional community, is Bauman's (2001) notion of community as defined by 'sociality' – a 'shared living' context characterized by societal

self-organization which nevertheless must avoid 'parochialism' to be progressively effective.

Bauman's notion implies the existence of multiple public spheres "where differences are recognized and appreciated" (Sassi, 2000: 278) – a plural and de-centered public sphere constituted not by total identification as in the traditional community but, rather, by *conflict that combines notions of interest and identity*. It is therefore characterized by the overlapping of an array of institutions and practical discourses, including informal movements and associations where solidarities are formed as well as formal governmental and legal institutions.

The dynamic of communicative confrontation – of messy conflict and dispute – in both the non-parochial, discursive geo-historical community and the transnational community of interest is the flip side to Lull's concept of an individual-centered, seamless global/local superculture. It is manifestly apparent in traditional community communication environments ranging from the unmediated New England town meeting to local call-in radio talk programs, public access cable television programs in the United States, and local commercial cable channels promoting a youth-culture avant-garde aesthetic. An important example of the latter is the commercial cable channel ATV in Helsinki, Finland, of which more later. It is also apparent in progressive political collectives on the Internet which emphasize 'transparent editorial gatekeeping' as an essential element of meaningful debate, such as The Independent Media Center (*indymedia.org*), a collectively-run global democratic newswire linking contributions from 57 media centers throughout the world.

In sum, the so-called new media era pertains not only to technological advancement, but also suggests a number of alternative theoretical interpretations as well as practices of a 'community'. Thus, it can be argued that for those public service broadcasters willing to become meaningfully involved in their respective societies in the new media era, it is crucial to revisit the traditional notion of audiovisual participation (and the nature of community formed by it) embedded in the Trickle Down model, and moreover to contrast it with new, emerging interpretations.

Modes of audiovisual participation

Community communications (whether local, national, or global as conceived in this essay) implies robust democratization of participation, whether as a maker of programs or as an engaged spectator. It also implies that anyone, professional or *amateur*, has the ability, with minimal training in the use of technology, to convey by electronic or other means of communication her or his message to others. These tenets, grounded in the tradition of alternative media activism, stand in direct contradistinction to the dominant audio-

visual milieu characterized by hierarchical control of the means of production and distribution manifested to various degrees by traditional public service broadcasters. The exclusionist regime of the latter is defended by arguing that creative 'talent' is limited to a select few artists capable of constructing meaningful narrative that will engage significant numbers of spectators (i.e., the 'numbers game' earlier alluded to in the discussion of the culture of seduction and celebrity). Allen (1998: 65) offers an example of this thinking in arguing that 'effective narrative' in television can *only* be created by talented professionals and "the number of people capable of creating attractive television programming, in any useful sense, is strictly limited".

Two suppositions offered by Allen are especially problematic. What, in his view, is 'effective narrative'? And what is meant by 'useful' attractive television programming? If, by effective narrative he implies stories with which audience members can identify and which they may find useful, these narratives do not by definition have to be packaged in 'attractive television' forms. They may, for example, be presented as Brechtian didactic theatre in an intentional deconstruction of the artifice of seamless narrative. Or they may be told through oral histories by the barely articulate whom, despite their unfamiliarity with the conventions of the medium they employ, nevertheless have important thoughts to convey to interested others. Such 'amateur' productions constitute an important genre of public access cable television programming in the United States. While they may not command legions of viewers – that 'authority of numbers' – they have contributed to community cohesion and collective memory.

David Hesmondhalgh (2000: 121) effectively counters Allen's cynical approach to communicative value when he defines the conditions which foster "democratized alternative media activism" in the tradition of Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin. Those conditions include:

1. widened participation and access
2. collaboration rather than hierarchical control and competition
3. greater equality of reward, opportunity and conditions for creative workers
4. geographically evenly-spread resources and talent
5. promotion of critical participation of consumers, to produce and receive
6. high-quality, diverse, innovative and adventurous texts emerging from such participation.

The authors would take Hesmondhalgh's argument one step further by expanding the definition of access to include participation in both the actual production of material and, of equal importance, *the knowledge that such production is possible and that the opportunity to produce is available to them*

if they so choose. Such a definition emphasizes the pleasure of participation and the enjoyment of narratives in a decidedly different manner than mere appreciation of 'attractive television programming'. It implies, as well, the acceptance of the aesthetic consequences of non-professionalism that comes to symbolize authenticity, even and significantly to the point that such non-professional authenticity is routinely incorporated into the professional audiovisual aesthetic. This development is clearly illustrated, for example, by the shaky hand-held camera and low-grade image quality of amateur video one now finds characteristic in many modern – and popular – television programs.

The importance of providing attractive television programming for purposes of audience building has been debated by public access cable television programmers in the United States from the outset (Himmelstein, 1982: 19-20). If access is conceived as a 'producer's medium' – meaning that programs must be aired no matter their technical and aesthetic quality or sophistication of content – then the question arises as to whether viewers will be attracted to the access channel and stay tuned? If, on the other hand, access is conceived as a 'viewer's medium,' then for a program to be aired it must be of at least reasonable technical and aesthetic quality and be substantive. In that event, would video novices, i.e., the very people for whom the idea of access was originally intended, thereby be screened out of the alternative communication process?

The compromise position and, one may argue, the best possible resolution of this conundrum, has been premised on the institution of formalized production training programs for would-be community program producers as a gateway to being given the use of the access channel's video production equipment. Because program making is seldom an isolated venture, such formal training fosters a face-to-face collaboration focused on a collective goal that is a key element in any community-based initiative.

In the United States, public access cable television, while mandated by federal legislation, is funded locally. The cable operator agrees to annually provide up to five per cent of its gross subscriber revenues to the city government in exchange for a multi-year franchise to operate. Ultimately, the city government determines how much of the gross subscriber revenues shall be dedicated to public, educational, and government [PEG] access channel operation and how much shall be assigned to the city's general fund. It is thus the citizens' responsibility to lobby city government to achieve the optimal distribution of funds to public access television. What at first glance appears problematic, i.e., the need to lobby local officials for what many citizens perceive to be a 'right,' may in fact be a civic blessing-in-disguise. The energy, focus, and organizational skills necessary to gain access in such a structure encourages collective civic participation that perhaps best defines community.

The traditional local public access facility was (and still is) a tangible public brick-and-mortar site (and discursive space) where people gather to collectively engage, 'face-to-face,' the pressing political, social and cultural issues

that concern the citizens of their community, using the means of electronic mass communication as an empowering tool. Recent significant advances in affordable and user-friendly electronic technology contributed to the birth and growth of public access television and today allows the individual and the independent production collective (typically operating on limited production budgets) to transcend the confines of locality in order to connect with the larger global community from their own private places via the Internet. Issues driving these independent producers' need to connect with like-minded individuals and groups may be global in scope; but global issues have local consequences. Linking local public access television with the global dissemination of the creative works of alternative media activists in the 'superculture' opens electronic media to the direct participation of those heretofore shut out of the mainstream media milieu and eliminates the 'professional' gatekeeper who otherwise determines what is worth disseminating.

Possibilities for the re-validation of public service broadcasting: Combining service and access

Chester and Larson (2002: 12) call for increased funding for public broadcasting in the United States which, they argue "needs a much broader mandate in the digital future," including especially the freedom to innovate. While there are clear differences in both the status and level of funding of public service broadcasting in the United States and in most countries of Europe, there can be little doubt that public service institutions on both continents are increasingly pressed by commercial competitors.

In the United States, many national cable program services are essentially duplicating the Public Broadcasting Service's most popular programming, while all the major broadcast and cable news services are actively exploiting web sites to offer expanded news/current affairs coverage. In Finland, to take an example from European public service broadcasting, the two national commercial channels (MTV3 and Nelonen) are effectively competing with the public service broadcaster YLE in terms of the diversity of overall program output (Aslama et al., 2001). Moreover, two commercial cable television services, ATV and Moon TV, have established a niche among the Finnish youth target demographic by offering programming that could be interpreted as a post-modern ironic parody of traditional 'official' current affairs journalism. The two cable upstarts offer coverage of events ranging from rock festivals to local peace demonstrations and provide sharper political commentary than any nationwide channel would ever dare to broadcast.

Such examples raise thorny questions. How can a public service broadcaster position itself in the emerging media culture to retain a substantial share of its traditional audience base, thus justifying its nation-bound service-oriented original remit, and at the same time cultivate the growing frag-

mented and individualized audience increasingly accustomed to the new media universe? The answer perhaps lies in re-formulating the traditional definition of 'service' to include greater citizen participation in electronic media via various forms of community communication, including local access. When the Trickle Down climate is not the dominant one, or when it begins to shift, these efforts may perhaps be more successful than the earlier attempts to enhance access and participation. This may be seen, in some aspects, in the public access cable television model which has evolved in the United States; or in the more recent approach developed by the U.K.'s BBC in the form of its Community Programme Unit. Both approaches give individuals and local community groups the means to produce their own broadcasts within public transmission models. The concept could also draw from web-based local/global interconnectedness. In the new media era such a concept is both socially desirable and more easily realised than ever before.

Hills and Michalis (2000) note that public service broadcasters are responding to the challenge from commercial competitors by establishing their own web sites that offer those interested (and connected) such ancillary services. These include expanded news and news analysis, sport, weather and traffic reports, archival material, adult learning material, links to external sites, and games or other diversions. But all of this is undertaken in an effort to expand audience reach. Some sites include the possibility for limited viewer interactivity, albeit only within a framework established and controlled by the public service broadcaster. While many such services may provide potentially useful enhancements of the public service broadcaster's traditional mission, they do not address the issue of engendering a more robust communicative participation raised throughout this essay.

With the advent of digital terrestrial television multiplexes in European countries the threadbare scarcity of airtime thesis can no longer justify excluding the wide variety of work by independent producers. That is especially relevant when broadly defined to include both those who are professionally trained and the so-called 'amateurs' without formal training but possessing an intense desire to communicate electronically. The issue thus ultimately becomes one of 'gatekeeping' (i.e., determining quality and appropriateness of content) versus 'opening the floodgates' (i.e., providing the broadest possible unrestricted 'gateway' allowable by law to all creative efforts regardless of their perceived quality or appropriateness).

The latter approach, i.e., the public access model of the producer's medium as discussed earlier, would result, in Linder's terms, in a range of programming "from silly to sublime, serious to sensational" (1999: 38). Depending on the broader cultural context in which audiovisual work is produced and/or distributed, limited proscriptions might, of course, be imposed by legislation or judicial decision. In the United States, to take one example, the Supreme Court has defined public access television as a 'public forum'. As such, according to the Court, "[A]ll parties have a constitutional right of access and the State must demonstrate compelling reasons for restricting access to a single

class of speakers, a single viewpoint, or a single subject" (quoted in Linder 1999: 25). This rationale has been used to protect political speech exercised by the Ku Klux Klan, a white supremacist group. On the other hand, the Court has held that obscenity is not protected 'speech' in a public forum.

Spectators in this relatively unrestricted milieu, as the authors have also noted, could experience the pleasure of participation in and enjoyment of non-professional authentic narratives if they so choose. They could reject these out of hand, if they so choose. But the choice would be theirs. The key to such a discursive exchange is the very availability of such narratives. Such a programming approach would in no way preclude the pursuit of the public service broadcaster's primary mission – producing and disseminating high-budget narrative and non-narrative efforts of acknowledged quality with a national and/or regional focus as part of its mandate to promote social cohesion.

By creating a public access infrastructure within its primary 'service operations' the public service broadcaster could satisfy the demands of both Trickle-Down service mandates and the emerging grassroots Bubble-Up access potentials. In terms of encouraging modalities of human togetherness (i.e., providing a voluntary point of social cohesion), the traditional mainstream programming would continue to emphasize national issues and identity, reinforce existing collective attitudes and beliefs, and emphasize solidarity in times of (political and/or economic) crisis. That could involve mobilization to action or, at least, encourage collective passive support or agreement. Moreover, such an infrastructure would extend the tradition of collective 'insurance' against individual incapacity and misfortune while stressing tolerance and even the celebration of diversity.

In simultaneously assuming a role in fostering community communications the public service broadcaster would create a public forum in which local challenges to entrenched collective attitudes and beliefs could be aggregated regionally and nationally. It would thereby help to create a discursive space for collective political action engendered by the process of 'working through' confrontation and controversy, beginning at the local level.

By thus re-conceiving and reorienting its mission in such terms, the public service broadcaster would more comprehensively address modalities of individuality. This is especially relevant in terms of its service mandate with regard to de-emphasizing the traditionally conceived role of the individual as a passive consumer of cultural products, goods, services, and politics (presently construed as the citizen's primary role as voter in a political horse race). Such a reorientation would emphasize the importance of the individual citizen's *obligation* to participate in political processes, even (and perhaps often) as a dissenter. It would therein celebrate the individual's holding and publicly proclaiming identities that may challenge dominant legitimated social positions. Equally important, by demystifying the audiovisual creative process it would encourage the individual to become an independent producer of mediated communication, and thus an active participant in social debate.

While the socio-cultural ramifications of technological convergence discussed in this essay are still in the formative process, certain clear outlines are beginning to emerge. Audiences can be characterized as increasingly fragmented and individualized. These individuals nevertheless continue to live in and to varying degrees resonate with geo-historical communities defined by locality. At the same time, they exhibit tendencies to actively seek out communities of interest associated with self-conceptions of identity (often with political repercussions) as they electronically traverse geography with increasing ease, melding the local and the global. In the process, they are becoming information producers as well as consumers. Commercial broadcasters and digital developers recognize and have begun to act on these trends in their own mercantile self-interest, for in the end those in the commercial sector depend for their livelihood upon knowledge of what they perceive audiences need (Caldwell 2002: 272-73).

Ultimately, the authors believe, the access model proffered herein may be viewed as a propitious public-service-specific opportunity to redefine its remit and remain connected with this evolving, increasingly self-directed and active audience. Public service broadcasters who choose to either ignore or dismiss this socially engaged aspect of the emerging new media milieu do so at their own peril.

Note

1. Linder (1999, p. xxvi) provides a useful functional definition of public access television as conceived and developed over the years in the United States: 'Public access television, or community television, as it is frequently called, began as an "attempt to use television as a direct means of communication without interference from professional middlemen such as journalists, directors, and producers" . . . [it] consists of people not affiliated with the cable operator, using their own equipment or equipment provided to them by the cable operator or local government at no or minimal cost, to produce non-commercial television shows that are cablecast over a channel that is provided, at no cost, solely for public access television. Public access television enables people to disseminate their messages to a local television audience, without the content being edited, filtered, or altered. And for minorities this is especially important.' By the late 1990s, U.S. public access cable television served approximately twenty percent of United States communities and produced more than fifteen-thousand hours of new local programming each week—more programming than is produced by NBC, CBS, ABC, FOX and PBS combined. Major users of public access channels include local activists, senior citizens, and government officials, amongst others. 'It is the nature of public access television that allows for an extremely diverse group of producers and programs' (Linder, 1999, p. 38). Programming deemed 'controversial' by directors of public access facilities includes 'sex and health education, particularly AIDS education; topical call-in; programs featuring political fringe opinions; programs featuring cultural minorities, especially young people; and experimental videos' (Linder, 1999, p. 43).

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Mediated Access

*Political Broadcasting, the Internet and Democratic Participation*¹

Brian McNair & Matthew Hibberd

Observers of British politics identify a ‘crisis’ of democratic participation, measured in falling rates of party membership, reduced involvement in political campaigning and, most urgently, a sharp decline in voting at local and general elections. If people cannot be bothered to vote, it is argued, it may be because they have no confidence in their democratic institutions. When so many citizens lose that confidence political parties find their mandate undermined, and the entire system of governance begins to lose credibility².

For some observers the media – as the main disseminators and translators of political discourse to the citizenry – are complicit in this process. Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch write of the “crisis of public communication” (1995)³. But even amongst some of the most fervent critics there is acknowledged to be a ray of hope in the evolution of the political media. This is the growth of *public participation*, or *access* broadcasting – forms of TV and radio programming in which citizens are physically present in the public sphere, encouraged to state their views on political issues, to debate them with professional experts of various kinds, and to question representatives of the political elite face-to-face in ways which – or so the programme makers would assert – amount to significant participation in the democratic process. The facilitation of public access has been part of the remit of British public service broadcasting since the 1940s. Developments in new interactive technologies, however, and the convergence of these with traditional broadcasting forms, are providing new opportunities for access programming. This essay looks at some examples of British access programming and the increasing use of the Internet to facilitate public participation in political debate.

Public participation programming is now, of course, a major element of broadcast output in many advanced capitalist societies. The biggest audiences go to programmes like those hosted by Oprah Winfrey in the USA and Robert Kilroy-Silk in the UK, which involve audiences in discussion of a wide range of human interest and lifestyle subjects. Some of these may have political dimensions, where for example they raise questions of social policy, or law

and order. We have not included such programmes in this study, however, focusing instead on those which aim to cover the issues of government and civic administration debated in the public sphere by parties and serving politicians, elected representatives, single issue groups and lobbyists. Fencing off these debates from the debate of, for example, child abuse or homophobia that might take place on Oprah or Kilroy is not to suggest that the latter are of lesser importance in the public and political life of a society. Indeed, we have previously written at length about day-time chat shows, docu-soaps and other forms of human interest public participation programming – what has been called ‘reality TV’ – and have drawn on that work in the design of this research (Hibberd, et al, 2000). But in so far as the crisis of democratic participation is generally seen as a phenomenon relating to party politics, and the processes of governance, this chapter is centred on forms of public participation media which explicitly address formal, institutionalised politics.

While for obvious reasons only a small number of individuals can take part in these programmes directly, many millions more watch and listen to them at home. They too, through their watching and listening, are invited by the programme makers to think of themselves as participants in political debate, and as citizens with a stake in the democratic process. Some variants of the form make this explicit by encouraging audience participation and feedback through post-programme telephone calls and electronic voting, the results of which may be fed back into the content of subsequent programmes, or become the subject of political journalism and debate elsewhere in the public sphere.

As part of the broader process of technological convergence now impacting on the broadcast media, access programming on TV and radio is now being complemented by e-mail and internet channels. British broadcasters have been among the leading promoters of on-line political debate and discussion, which they see as a complement to their more traditional activities. Access programmes will often promote further debate and discussion via their on-line sites.

The democratic implications of the rise of access broadcasting (and now on-line media) have been the subject of a growing sub-field within the study of political communication. Some commentators, such as Sonia Livingstone and Peter Lunt in the UK, have welcomed the emergence of what they call ‘talk show democracy’ (1994). Kenneth Newton speculates on the positive role of public access broadcasting in the “mobilisation” of the citizenry, and their contribution to the construction of an informed, participatory public sphere (1997). In the United States, an expanding body of research examines patterns of participation in TV and talk radio shows that address overtly political topics, including those that do so under the direction of idiosyncratic, sometimes extreme ‘shock jocks’ such as Morton Downey Jr. and Rush Limbaugh (Herbst, 1995; Barker, 1998; Jones, 1998). Even as they criticise the provocative, reactionary manner in which these programmes sometimes

handle the issues under discussion, many analysts note that they comprise the only media spaces in the USA where ordinary members of the public can have their say on the issues of the day, political and otherwise, and that this in itself gives them potential value as democratic instruments.

"Forum media", argues Douglas Rushkoff, "however sensationalised or tabloid it may get, depends upon the interpretive and evaluative skills of its audiences, even if it does not demand knowledge of facts or history" (1996: 65). Rushkoff defends US access shows precisely on the grounds that they are "participatory". In contrast to the tradition of top-down journalistic 'spoon-feeding' of news to passive audiences eating their TV dinners at home (as Rushkoff characterises the producer-consumer relationship associated with the 'straight' news and current affairs media), access programmes on TV and radio, "call upon the intelligence of [their] viewers and participants" (p.65). Moreover, they "loosen the grip of public relations experts on the opinions of the greater population". Rushkoff here turns the familiar criticism that contemporary political discourse is excessively managed and spun on its head, contrasting the spun-ness of traditional news media with the relatively raw and unspun character of political access programming. In the era of the soundbite and the photo-op, he suggests, and to the extent that it breaks through the PR-produced rhetoric to the political reality underneath, public participation media acquire an enhanced value.

Others are critical of the 'videomalaise' caused by the political media in general, and pessimistic about the capacity of public participation channels to contribute usefully to the democratic process. The fact that all forms of electronic access are, by definition, arenas for *mediated* politics conducted at various removes from what these critics would characterise as 'reality', undermines their democratic value for many commentators. Robert Putnam's influential study of the decline of civic culture in America, *Bowling Alone* (2000: 41), argues that "TV-based politics [and, by extension, radio and Internet-based politics] is to political action as watching ER is to saving someone in distress. Just as one cannot restart a heart with one's remote control, one cannot jump-start citizenship without face-to-face participation. Citizenship is not a spectator sport".

Indeed it is not, and we do not argue here that mediated political debate, whether conducted through TV, radio or on-line channels can, or should be, a substitute for participation in voting, campaigning or involvement in political parties. We do, however, contest the assumption underlying Putnam's position that mediated participation in politics (participation experienced at one remove through TV, radio or any other channel of electronic communication) is in some way inferior to the interpersonal, face-to-face modes of the past, when politicians would tour the country and participate in hustings meetings at which they might be robustly challenged and heckled⁴. These encounters, appreciated though they no doubt were to those who had access to them, were limited to audiences of a few hundreds or thousands at most. The great majority of the people had no involvement in them beyond

the journalistic accounts they read in their newspapers (those who could read, that is) or hear on the conversational grapevine.

Mediated political debate, by contrast, has the potential to reach millions of people in their own homes. This essay rejects any presumption that those millions are less likely to be informed, motivated or mobilised into action by public participation media than would have been the nineteenth century crowd at a hustings meeting, struggling to hear the content of a political speech delivered without the aid of electronic amplification by a man on a podium hundreds of feet away. Our working assumption, as communication scholars, is that the audio-visual clarity of the broadcast media, joined now by the interactive possibilities of the Internet, and the penetration of these media into the domestic environments of virtually the entire population, allow for the transmission of political messages which are no less intimate or affecting than the interpersonal exchanges of the past.

This chapter describes how the producers of converging forms of mediated access (TV, radio and Internet) seek to engage UK citizens in the discussion of public affairs, and to facilitate their participation in the life of a healthy, 'deliberative' democracy. It considers the extent to which mediated access can contribute to what Chambers and Costain characterise as "a healthy public sphere where citizens can exchange ideas, acquire knowledge and information, confront public problems, exercise public accountability, discuss policy options, challenge the powerful without fear of reprisals, and defend principles" (2000, ed., p.xi)⁵.

Why access?

That citizens should have a degree of access to those who govern their lives, and some means of participation in the processes by which political decisions are made, are correctly viewed as characteristics of a healthy democracy. They should, as Chambers and Costain note, be able to pass critical comment on their governors, and expect their voices to be heard. William Gamson writes that "public discourse can and should empower citizens, give them voice and agency, build community, and help citizens to act on behalf of their interests and values. The normative standard here is one of engaging citizens in the democratic process through their active participation in the public sphere" (2001, p.56).

The main vehicles for the exercise of such participation have always been, and are today more than ever, the media. From the first readers' letters published by newspapers in the Seventeenth Century, to e-mail participation in the radio and TV programmes of the Twenty-First Century, the facilitation of public access to political debate has been recognised as a democratic function of the journalistic 'fourth estate'. Where 'straight' journalism ideally provides the information (news and commentary) on which a sound democ-

racy is founded, access media exist to provide opportunities for public participation in political discourse, both as a means for citizens to acquire political information, and as a prelude or incentive to political action (such as voting in an election). They provide access both to the debating fora in which individual and public opinions about political issues can be formed; and to political elites, in contexts where they are obliged to engage in debate with ordinary citizens.

In Britain the forms of broadcast access vary from medium to medium and channel to channel, in what is a mixed media economy and an increasingly fragmented market of niche audiences. All involve some element of public participation, organised for the purpose of achieving three democratic goals: *representation*, of the people in the public sphere; *interrogation*, or what Habermas (1989) has called the *critical scrutiny* of political elites by the people; and the *mobilisation* of citizens to participate in politics. These are the *normative* aspirations of public access programming; the goals set for themselves by the makers of the programmes, and against which their effectiveness as mechanisms of mediated democratic participation can be evaluated. The rest of this chapter considers how those aspirations are put into practice in the UK, against the background of a changing *political culture* in which the nature of 'the public', and the expectations of that public in respect of their interaction with political elites, have significantly altered; growing *economic constraints* caused by an ever-more competitive media environment; and an emerging *technological environment* of enhanced convergence and interactivity – exemplified by the increased use of e-mail and Internet channels – which is constantly expanding the opportunities for mediated access to political debate.

Access programming and representation

The idea of representation is fundamental to democracy, and from the birth of access programming in Britain in the late 1940s has been a key structuring element in the design of British public service broadcasting. *Representation* in this context refers both to access programmes' status as an estimation of political and public opinion in the country, and to their constitution of the population in the public sphere. Access programmes function as visible symbols of 'people power'. The displays of mediated public participation they allow are signifiers of democracy itself. Access programmes on radio and television represent the people to themselves, in the process of engaging with the political elite. They give the people voice, as a support to the exercise of their democratic power.

To have resonance at this ideological level, participating members of the public must be accepted as an accurate sample of 'the people', and their views expressed on air as a valid indicator of what 'the people' are thinking

about current political issues at a given moment. One of the main *production challenges* of public participation broadcasting is thus to convey these qualities to viewing and listening audiences. This challenge has been complicated by the evolution of British political culture in the post-World War II period, driven by changing social attitudes to class, gender, and ethnicity, as well as the onset, post-1997, of devolution and other constitutional reforms set in motion by the Labour government which came to power in that year. Taken together, these processes have undermined the traditional notion of a unitary Great British public and encouraged recognition of the UK as a multi-nation state comprising many, often overlapping publics defined by social class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, geography and lifestyle.

Normative democratic theory suggests that all of these have the right to, and need for, some representation in the expanded public sphere of the Twenty First century. The broadcasters profess to understand that need, and to this extent the history of public participation programming in Britain is the history of producers' efforts to expand and refine their socio-demographic reach, and to find modes of facilitating access appropriate to the many different publics they now aspire to serve. This effort has required revision of the conception of 'the people' which underpins the broadcasters' work, and a movement from a model of public participation which can be viewed as broadsheet in content and style (designed for a relatively educated and affluent public), to forms which can be described as mid-market and tabloid.

The unfolding of this process can be seen with the first example of the public participation genre in the UK – BBC radio's *Any Questions?* (launched in 1948). *AQ?* brings a sample of the public together to question four panelists – typically comprising three professional politicians and one other, such as a journalist, a senior public servant, or a lobbyist, judged competent to comment on political issues. This panel is *representative* in so far as it contains a balance of political viewpoints from left to right of the parliamentary political spectrum, supplemented on occasion by a panelist drawn from a recognised pressure group. Editions of the programme recorded in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland will reflect the distinctive political environments to be found in those areas, with representatives from nationalist parties usually included.

The *AQ?* panel is a kind of parliamentary democracy in miniature, both in its careful maintenance of party political balance, and in its construction of democratic accountability – a visible demonstration of the accessibility of the political class to the voting public (represented both in the audience of 500 or so present at the recording, and the larger audience of approximately 2 million listening to the broadcast at home). Ensuring that panellists answer questions is a chairman drawn from the senior ranks of the fourth estate, with the authority and the journalistic licence to act as 'watchdog' over them.

Schools, universities and other public institutions apply to host the programme on a given week, and the demographic composition of participants is skewed accordingly. In this respect *AQ?*'s audience is representative less

of the people as a whole than a sub-set of what are probably its more civically engaged, politically motivated members – the middle classes, professionals, those who might already be thought more likely to participate in the political process, and can engage with the panelists as active citizens. To this extent the programme reflects the political culture of the late 1940s when it was established, amidst the prevalence of assumptions about who was best qualified to participate in political debate, what it was appropriate for ordinary people to say, and when the still-relatively uneducated working classes (as well as women and ethnic minority groups) were excluded from all but walk-on and vox pop roles in the public sphere.

Expanding access

In its reasonableness and quiet good humour *Any Questions?* is, for many, a model of how mediated political debate should be conducted. Its audience, however, is comprised mainly of those who are likely to be relatively well-equipped with social capital and engaged in a range of political processes, from school boards to single issue campaigns and party work. This is not a criticism of the programme, which to this day serves a large and loyal audience, but suggests that its value as a participatory vehicle does not extend to the millions of citizens usually implicated in the crisis of democratic participation.

To their credit, British broadcasters recognise this limitation, and subsequent models of access programming have sought to provide more genuinely representative participatory fora, and to target those who are less engaged politically than the typical *AQ?* audience; those, in short, who may be lacking in the cultural resources required for active citizenship and who might, if access broadcasting can indeed play a role in enhancing political participation, be thought most likely to benefit from it. For example, *Question Time*, which premiered on BBC television in 1979, and is today the corporation's flagship participation programme, proactively seeks out what its presenter describes as "a fairly crude but quite effective cross section [of the public] based on age and gender, race and political affiliation". ITV's *Dimbleby* has a similarly representative ethos, aspiring to what its producer calls "a broad range in social class and all the other demographic terms".

The UK's public service commercial channels, dependent as they are on advertising revenue, are under greater pressure than the BBC to make programmes which are both political *and* popular. One product of this tension was the monarchy debate broadcast on ITV over three hours in January 1997. This major experiment in public participation programming was introduced to viewers as "the biggest live debate ever in the history of television, on the most contentious issue of the decade", a reference to the future of the British monarchy, even then (before the death of Princess Diana in August

1997) the subject of intense public and constitutional debate. The production brought together 3,000 people, divided into pro- and anti-monarchy camps, arranging them for dramatic effect in a circular arena surrounding a panel of pro- and anti-monarchy experts.

We have discussed the form and content of the monarchy debate in some detail elsewhere⁶. Its assembly of such a large group of the British people, in a uniquely irreverent discussion of an institution whose earthly representatives, as Andrew Morton pointed out during the debate, were but a few decades ago believed by one third of the public to be “descended from God”, lies at one extreme of a continuum of access programming styles bounded at the other by *Any Questions?* The latter’s more passive style of public participation was here replaced by a passionate, at times rowdy crowd, encouraged by the gladiatorial style of the debate, and the blunt tone of the panelists. The result was a noisy display of public participation in a debate of considerable importance to the future of British democracy.

The ethos of what we might call *mass representation* (our term rather than theirs) also inspires the producers of *The Wright Stuff*, a day-time talk show broadcast by the UK’s newest commercial TV network, Channel 5. The audience for *The Wright Stuff*, as for most day-time talk shows, is predominantly female (around 65% of the programme’s 180,000 viewers are women), and many of the topics discussed are of the Oprah/Kilroy/Tricia human interest type, focused on the ‘feminine’ private sphere. Others are political in the sense defined above, addressing what the producer calls “typically male” issues such as taxation.

This distinction between the feminine private and the male public spheres – long identified by feminist analysts as a major and lingering limitation of political culture in patriarchy – is one which *The Wright Stuff*’s producers set out to challenge with an agenda which they proudly identify as “tabloid”: in the presenter’s words, “populist but not trashy, informed but not too worthy”. *The Wright Stuff* seeks to make politics the domain of the day-time talk show audience – predominantly women, pensioners, and the unemployed. Similarly ‘tabloid’ in their style and content are many of the radio phone-in programmes, which take pride in extending opportunities for access to as broad a range of the British public as possible, widening the range of contributors beyond what one producer describes as the “metropolitan chattering classes”.

These programmes are a result of their producers’ recognition that genuinely representative public participation in mediated political debate necessarily involves the inclusion of a variety of discursive styles and debating conventions. One senior news editor identifies a trend towards “targetted news and current affairs” in British broadcast journalism. “The consensus about how you address audiences, the techniques you use, the production methods, is breaking down”. The evolution of access programming in the UK has been consistent with that trend, so that the genre can now be seen to occupy a *differentiated* public sphere embracing (like other forms of journalism) broadsheet, mid-market and popular (or tabloid) segments. Access broadcasting

services many different publics in their engagement with the political elite, from the polite register of *Any Questions* to the more disrespectful tones of radio phone-in shows, and all the variations in style and tone in between.

Limits on representation

That said, efforts to broaden the reach of access programming are constrained by the simple fact that readiness to participate is not evenly distributed amongst the population. Participation in mediated politics, like other forms of civic engagement, appears to be linked to the possession of social capital, and it is not surprising that those who respond to invitations to participate tend to be, as programme-makers themselves characterise it, male, middle class, middle aged and white. On several of the mainstream access strands the preponderance of men over women amongst those members of the public applying to participate is pronounced. Women appear to be more reticent in these contexts; a cultural hangover of patriarchy, perhaps, and the dominant role it has traditionally allotted men in the conduct of public discourse.

Radio phone-in programmes experience a similar bias. The rise of these programmes has coincided with the growth of the mobile telephone market, a technology with the potential to expand the possibilities of public access broadcasting, by enabling the participation of people outside their homes and on the move. Most users, however, from the statistics provided by programme-makers, turn out to be men driving from one business meeting to another, or sitting in traffic jams. The ratio of male:female callers to one radio show was found to be 70:30.

To address gender and other forms of imbalance the programme makers employ computer software packages which record the demographic profile of calls as they come in, and rank them according to what kind of caller is going to be required by that particular edition of the show. Producers may enlist the help of special interest groups with contacts in under-represented sectors of the public – youth organisations for young people; community groups working with ethnic minorities, and so on. Programmes have been made especially for sections of the community identified as under-represented in the more mainstream strands. In these ways *representation has to be actively worked for, or constructed*, to the programme producers' blue print of what an 'ideal' audience should look like.

Interrogation

If the producers of public access broadcasting have aspired to become more representative over time, the form of the critical scrutiny of political elites

which they enable – the *interrogative* function of mediated access – has also evolved. As already noted, *Any Questions?* model of critical scrutiny reflects the deferential political culture of the era which gave it birth. Participants in *Any Questions?* are a polite audience, and appear in the main satisfied to put their questions and sit back while the experts pontificate.

But elsewhere in the broadcast media realising the interrogatory function of public participation programming means enabling audiences to do more than sit passively before government ministers or party leaders as they answer questions or debate with each other on the panel. In today's political culture access has to be more than merely symbolic. It must be accompanied by the visible, relatively unrestrained participation of citizens in robust debate with their governors. When this happens, argues one presenter, "it really does serve as a substitute for the best kind of hustings".

In so far as access programmes frequently involve senior politicians they represent a highly distinctive feature of British political culture. In few comparable democracies are leading politicians required to confront members of the public live on-air (as British access programmes often require them to do). On *Question Time* and *Any Questions?* Cabinet ministers are regular guests, and the Prime Minister has been a regular guest on all the main access shows.

Access and mobilisation

The information provided though access programmes has a purpose – that of mobilisation, by which we mean stirring an audience to act on, or at least think about, the issues under discussion. Achieving this means paying attention to the aesthetic quality as much as the democratic functionality of the access form: skilled presenters, engaged and enthusiastic participants, in the studio or elsewhere, lively and relevant questions – all are deemed essential by producers. One outcome of the desire to engage audiences has been the expansion of expert contributors and panelists beyond the traditional ranks of professional politics, political journalism, and senior public figures.

In 1999 the *Question Time* panel was expanded from the four-person format dominated by political experts (three party members and one non-politician) to five, to make room for a 'non-professional' – someone who, though a celebrity or senior figure in his or her chosen field, such as entertainment or business, is independent of the political class and thus more likely to be seen by the audience as 'one of us'. Comedians and musicians are among those celebrities who have appeared on *Question Time* in recent years, in the hope that the programme's reach can be extended to audiences not usually associated with serious political debate, such as younger age groups. In this and other respects, the makers of public access broadcasting have moved closer to what is by any standards a form of political *infotainment*, where

the entertainment function is viewed as an essential pre-requisite for the achievement of their democratic objectives. To entertain successfully is to engage the audience, from which – programme makers believe – the normative democratic aims of access broadcasting may more readily be achieved.

Some critics argue that these goals are irreconcilable since, as commercial pressures intensify, the demand for audience-grabbing entertainment will always tend to supercede and negate the functions of illumination and interrogation. Peter Dahlgren, for example, writes that “while popularisation can and has been in many cases a positive development, bringing more people into the public sphere, by most accounts today popularisation is degenerating into trivialisation and sensationalisation” (2001: 33). For other commentators, the provision of useful political information, critical scrutiny of elites, and entertainment should not be viewed as mutually exclusive goals. John Street has observed that “the traditional boundaries marking where politics ends and entertainment begins no longer hold” (2001: 3). Della Carpini and Williams argue that “entertainment media often provide factual information, stimulate social and political debate, and critique government” (2001: 161). If one of the democratic aims of access broadcasting is to motivate and mobilise citizens into taking an interest in politics, then making entertainment of political debate becomes a valid element of an effective programming strategy.

The development of public access programming in the UK has not, however, prevented a decline in voting rates, and to that extent has had little discernible impact on the crisis of democratic participation. Media effects, of course, are rarely straightforward, and what people do with the information they receive from access programming will always be dependent on the content of the information, and the context in which it is received by the citizen. Cynicism about politics, where it exists, may not always be retarded by, and indeed may be an intelligible response to exposure to politicians in the media. In this sense, we would argue, successful access broadcasting may turn people off institutional politics as much as it motivates them to go out and participate in elections. That said, we conclude that access broadcasting does contribute to what has become in the UK a distinctive political culture of mediated public debate. This emerging culture of access coexists with a broader crisis of democratic participation.

Access broadcasting and the Internet

The low turnout in the 2001 general election has led broadcasters in the UK, especially the BBC, to review their provision of political programming to study alternative ways in which new audiences, especially the under 45s, might become more fully engaged with politics (Kevill, 2002). Access pro-

gramming is seen as a element in persuading these audiences to engage with the political system, often in conjunction with the internet.

In recent years the UK government has actively encouraged the development of the Internet as a democratic tool. The net is seen as an ideal medium to communicate directly with the public across a wide range of government services, to provide more information to people, and to “drive forward citizen participation in democracy” (Office of the UK e-Envoy, 2001), especially among social groups that currently feel excluded from the democratic process. For Dick Morris, former strategic adviser to Bill Clinton, “the net offers a potential for direct democracy so profound that it may well transform not only our system of politics but our very form of government... Bypassing national representatives and speaking to one another, the people of the world will use the Internet increasingly to form a political unit for the future” (quoted in Coleman and Götze, 2001: 8).

Academics, too, have stressed the possibilities of the net in reshaping and reinvigorating democratic institutions and processes (Blumler and Coleman, 2001). At the same time, as already noted, British broadcasters have spear-headed the use of Internet channels for public participation in political debate. As yet, however, relatively little is known about who uses these websites, and why, and if users perceive them to be important communicative spaces, access to which has tangible political outcomes. The ESRC-funded research on which this chapter is based therefore included a web-based questionnaire on UK audience attitudes to political participation on TV, the radio and via the net.

The survey addressed users of the website run by *Channel Four News*⁷, which offers viewers to the programme further information about the main news items of the day. Respondents comprised a broad range of socio-economic groups, representing all parts of the United Kingdom. A prominent feature of the survey, consistent with the pattern of gender bias seen in public participation broadcasting was the heavy under-representation of women (78 per cent of respondents were male, despite the fact they constitute only 50 per cent of the total *Channel Four News* audience⁸). Many of our respondents viewed themselves as active participants in the democratic process. More than one-third regularly (at least once a month) listened to radio studio debates such as *Any Questions?*, with 58 per cent watching TV studio debates such as, *Question Time*. Also 78 per cent voted in the 1997 General Election (compared to the national average of 71 per cent). Finally, 33 per cent of our respondents had contacted their local Member of Parliament or Councillor in the past year, and 53 per cent had signed a petition in the past twelve months.

Several survey questions related to political participation in website chat rooms or message boards. We found that 23 per cent of respondents had taken part in one or more chat-room discussions or had posted messages on the web site. The main reasons cited by our respondents for taking part in such debates were due to a strong interest in the subject matter, seeking more

in-depth debate, the attractiveness of anonymised participation and the ease of participation (from home). Some participants were merely curious to take part in an on-line debate. We asked users if they felt that website discussions boards were a useful addition to the political process, and if so, why? Nearly three-quarters of respondents stated that they were because they provided a platform for public opinion to be aired and expressed. Others felt that websites provided a low-cost method of participation. However, other respondents believed that websites and discussion board had little discernible impact on the political process, and some argued that message boards only provided an outlet for opinionated people.

The survey indicated that websites such as that run by *Channel Four News* tend to facilitate talk between (male) citizens and groups already involved in, and committed to, the political process. This finding is consistent with our study of access programming, which revealed that many participants are those relatively 'active' citizens who are already engaged and interested in 'real' politics. These findings are also consistent with other net-related participation studies, as Peter Dahlgren argues:

The evidence thus far is that the Net is a tool, a resource for those with political involvement, but that it generally does not recruit large numbers of new citizens to the public sphere. The Net is not likely to counter the 'great withdrawal' from mainstream politics... (2001: 51)

Conclusion: Limits on participation

There are today more channels for access to political debate available in Britain than has ever been the case, routinely subjecting the British political elite, up to and including the prime minister, to critical scrutiny of a qualitatively different kind from that to which the British people have been accustomed. There has, in addition, been a convergence of broadcast and on-line media in the service of access. We have shown that British public service broadcasting continues to take seriously its remit to provide spaces for access to political debate, and how the makers of public participation broadcasting increasingly utilise the interactive potential of e-mail and Internet channels to better achieve their democratic aims. This chapter has identified some of the limits to this process, but the broadcasters' efforts to address the crisis of democratic participation through the imaginative use of access media continue. They should not be expected to resolve the crisis of democratic participation on their own, but those concerned for the health of democracy should welcome and support their development as one element of an evolving political culture.

Notes

1. The research on which this chapter is based was conducted as part of the Economic and Social Research Council's Democracy and Participation programme (project reference L215 25 2016). It represents an edited and combined version of papers given separately by McNair and Hibberd for the RIPE2002 conference in Finland.
2. These phenomena are not restricted to the UK, but are a feature of many mature democracies throughout the world.
3. This critique can be contested, of course. See Journalism and Democracy (McNair, 2000) for a book-length qualitative evaluation of the political public sphere.
4. If such encounters still take place in modern campaigns, they are more often than not controlled with sinister precision by public relations and communications professionals whose job it is to prevent unscripted moments of reality intrusion.
5. The article is based on data assembled from interviews and focus group discussions conducted with the various actors involved in the production and consumption of access programming, including the makers of the programmes (presenters, producers, commissioning editors and researchers. Interviews with all of the above were conducted in London, Bristol, Manchester, Glasgow and Edinburgh between August 2000 and June 2001), many of those who participated in access programmes, and focus groups of audience members conducted in London, Glasgow and Stirling. The programmes selected for the study include the major examples in a range of formats produced by the terrestrial TV and radio channels.
6. See McNair, 2000, pp118-120.
7. It is important to note that the respondents were self-selecting and, as such, are not representative of net users in general. Our respondents were also highly civic-minded. Furthermore, this part of the research only looked at one website – albeit a popular one. The questionnaire was distributed in December-January 2000-01, and attracted 436 responses from website users, on questions about attitudes to mediated political participation and to access programmes on TV, radio and the net. The survey lasted one month in order to gather a sample that adequately represents all visitors to that site. The survey also consisted primarily of pre-coded questions in order to encourage response rates and therefore improve the reliability of the data.
8. The age profile of our respondents was young. Seventy-one per cent of respondents were aged between 16 and 44 percent. Eighty-six per cent of respondents classified themselves as British White.

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Consumer Convergence

Digital Television and the Early Interactive Audience in the UK

Vivi Theodoropoulou

The concept of convergence is commonly used to refer to the blurring of boundaries of previously distinct industry sectors (broadcasting, computing, telecommunications), as well as the process of integrating different technologies and their functions into a single medium (Marsden & Verhulst, 1999). Industry and technology convergence are at the centre of current policy design and regulation around much of the world, and media analysts and scholars are keen to map economic, technological and social consequences. What is often overlooked in the debate about convergence is a critical assessment and empirical examination of potential changes in consumer behaviour.

Particularly the convergence between the TV and PC, as manifest in the introduction of interactive digital TV [DTV], is said to have major consequences such as the fragmentation of the audience, the participatory and 'empowered' interactive TV user, and consumers construed as producers and resourceful co-creators of their viewing menus. Yet, 'consumer behaviour convergence' and the prospect that "the now predominant 'passive' television viewing behaviour will be replaced by more interactive behaviour patterns" (Stipp, 1999: 11) is premised on speculation. Consumers' adoption of new media and their usage patterns and preferences have implications not only for the further design of technologies but also for the future shape of industry convergence. Hence, an examination of how people adopt and consume new media must be at the heart of any informed discussion about convergence.

This is particularly important in deliberations about the future of public service broadcasting [PSB] because most PSB operators in Europe are re-defining their role in attempts to keep up with industry and technological developments. But public service broadcasters and key industry players alike need to adopt a more 'audience centred' approach. That implies basing their strategies and schemes for further development on empirical evidence of how audiences respond to their offerings. This is vital to soon understand which of their future plans are likely to be embraced by the audience and what the social consequences of their offerings portend.

The empirical examination of convergent consumer behaviour is the subject of this chapter. The author examines the process of DTV consumption by its early audience in the UK as revealed in the adoption and use of Sky digital, the leading DTV service. I argue that audiences are one of the key factors shaping DTV and that, contrary to marketing predictions and industry hype, the 'converged' viewer has yet to become a reality. This conclusion is supported by empirical research that draws on a nation wide survey combined with in-depth interviews with Sky digital subscribers.

Adhering to a techno-sceptical line of thought, I argue that the consumption of DTV as a 'hybrid' medium – one encompassing both old and new services and thus patterns of consumption – is rather 'conservative'. The findings show not only that the use of interactive services is fairly marginal but most importantly that what consumers want from DTV is, simply put, more TV. This highlights the discrepancy between the industry's efforts to implement new technological forms in broadcasting and audiences' willingness to negotiate such forms.

After mapping the UK digital environment and discussing the methodology of the research, I present early empirical findings¹ to sketch a profile of the early Sky digital subscriber. The discussion proceeds by outlining the reasons why the members of the sample decided to subscribe to DTV, and then addresses their viewing preferences and use of interactivity.

The digital landscape in the UK

The UK is currently the most advanced European DTV market with adoption rates that exceed 8 million². It became the first country to have a satellite and a terrestrial digital broadcasting system in 1998, with BSkyB launching the digital satellite operator Sky digital in October 1998 and ONdigital launching the first digital terrestrial service in the world one month later. Telewest and NTL, the cable operators, launched their digital services in 1999. Hence, DTV was available on a subscription basis in all three platforms: satellite, cable, and terrestrial.

Since 1999, developments have changed the British digital landscape. Sky digital, the satellite operator, is still dominating the market with approximately 6.1m subscribers³. Both cable providers, with a joint subscription base of 1.6m⁴, are facing economic difficulties, administrative and financial restructuring⁵. ONdigital was re-launched as ITV digital⁶, but due to severe technical problems, debt, and low levels of subscriptions eventually shut down in May 2002⁷. ITV digital's collapse signalled the creation of a free-to-air digital terrestrial platform as its licence was granted to a consortium of the BBC, BSkyB and transmitter operator Crown Castle which launched the subscription free service Freeview in October 2002. This development is perceived to strengthen the role of the BBC in the digital era and to also preserve Govern-

ment plans for the switch off of the analogue signal by 2010. It is believed that a free-to-view service will attract sceptical viewers who do not wish to take up digital pay TV, and will therefore help create a fully digital Britain.

Methodology

The research employed a multiple method design based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to study DTV adoption and use in scope and depth. This triangulation scheme enabled portraying early DTV adopters and their media use through survey research as “a factual slice through time” (Livingstone, 2002: 25), as well as offering a more contextualised articulation of users’ experiences with DTV through the employment of qualitative interviews.

The survey was conducted in January 2001. It used a simple random sample of 1986 Sky digital subscribers who had registered for the service from its launch day until August 2000, when its subscription base was 3.8m. The postal survey achieved a response rate of 35.25%, which is considered satisfactory for academic postal surveys. In total, 700 subscribers returned completed questionnaires. Admittedly, this response cannot lead to broad generalisations concerning the whole population of Sky digital subscribers. However, the reported figures provide indicators and outline trends which, when interpreted with caution and in conjunction with other research and broader developments in the UK broadcasting context, can give a reasonably balanced overview of how DTV was consumed in its early years.

The main objective of the survey was to map the early DTV audience in its social and media characteristics. It specifically aimed to study early adopters’ patterns of viewing, emerging patterns of use and the reasons why they adopted DTV. The quantitative component of the empirical design was complemented by qualitative insight gleaned from 15 in-depth interviews with a sub-group⁸ of the original sample. The interviews, apart from allowing the researcher to validate, challenge and expand the survey data, aimed to provide a more in-depth account of consumption and users’ domestication of DTV. Thus, the interviews explore and assess how users negotiate issues of newness and change, how they develop a relationship with the new medium and how this changes through time and use, as they grow accustomed and more familiar with it.

Demographic and media profile

The results suggest that the average early Sky digital subscriber who participated in the research is male, around 45 years of age, of low to average

educational level, in full-time work, married and living with his family. These figures are in agreement with BMRB's research which showed that the majority of Sky digital viewers are male (55%), in full time work (46%) and in the age group of 35-54 (41%)⁹.

The majority of respondents are continuing customers of Sky analogue who switched to its digital platform. Only 29% of the participants had no previous experience of multichannel TV. The technology most commonly used for digital reception is the set top box (called a 'digibox'), whilst integrated DTV sets indicate a poor take up.

The overwhelming majority of Sky digital households benefited from the Sky Free Initiative promotion whereby they received the digibox and correlated reception equipment free of charge. In fact, the decoder give-aways and the 'set top box price wars' that followed between Sky digital and rival ONdigital was considered a major drive up for DTV sales (Papathanassopoulos, 2002: 50).

A distinctive characteristic of DTV households is that they are comparatively 'advanced' in terms of their in-home media equipment. This is mainly reflected in the ownership of multiple TV, telephone and music related equipment, which appears to be higher than that of the national average¹⁰. The possession of PCs and Internet links in Sky digital households is considerably high, as well, when compared to the national averages. Whereas 45% of UK households own a PC and 33% have Internet access¹¹, 65% of all households participating in the survey have one or more PCs, and out of those 91% have Internet access.

With reference to such characteristics, then, early DTV users do not neatly fit the profile of the typical early adopter; that of a young upscale male attracted by new technologies. Early DTV users instead tend to be older and less educated, were accustomed to the multichannel experience before joining the digital world and secured a cheap entry into the digital era; yet they are also ICT rich and media literate users. This profile of an 'atypical' early adopter for DTV suggests the consumption and use of the new medium might be atypical as well. This hypothesis was verified, as discussed later in the chapter.

Reasons for subscription

The most popular reason respondents decided to get DTV was the greater choice of channels it allows (see Table 1). Eight out of ten said the larger availability of channels was an important reason why they acquired DTV. Picture and sound quality was the second most popular reason. More than half of the respondents decided to take up DTV because it gives them access to more sports channels and events, whereas for three out of ten the greater provision of films was important. This implies not only that audiences are becoming fragmented, complex and versatile in content prefer-

ences, but also that from the outset of their digital experience consumers valued the new medium as a content and programming provider.

Table 1. Reasons for taking up DTV

Reasons for taking up DTV	%
Bigger choice of channels	77.3
Better picture & sound quality	67.6
More sports channels/shows	49.9
Films	31.7
Future switch off of analogue TV*	28.6
Interactive services	12.4
DTV is the future of TV	10.9
Need for new TV set	7.6

* We refer to Governmental plans for the switch off of the analogue signal between 2006-2010.

Source: Theodoropoulou, 2001.

Interestingly, interactivity was not a common motive for participants getting DTV. Only 12.4% considered services like TV shopping, banking, e-mails and games as influential incentives for subscription. They considered interactivity as peripheral to the core of channel abundance and programme delivery of DTV and it was not central in their decision to subscribe.

Concerning the subscription to Sky digital in particular, rather than another digital provider, choice and channel variety was again prominent as the basis on which subscription decisions were made for seven out of ten participants (see Table 2). This is followed by the availability of free reception equipment, which functioned as an inducement for more than half of the respondents. For 44% of participants the fact that they were previous subscribers of Sky analogue was also important in their decision to switch to the digital service. Sky Sports was an additional motive for some (36%) to choose Sky digital, but Sky digital interactive services were highly unpopular.

Table 2. Reasons for taking up Sky digital

Reasons for taking up Sky digital	%
Bigger choice of channels	68.7
Free Digibox	52.0
Had Sky analogue in the past	44.0
Sports	36.0
More competitive prices	23.0
Unaware of other digital provider	19.6
Only Sky was offered at that time	13.9
Interactive TV games	6.6
Interactive TV shopping	5.6
Emails	3.1
Interactive banking	1.4

Source: Theodoropoulou, 2001.

The evidence clearly shows that 1) choice, 2) content, 3) thematic programming and 4) low-cost entry are the most compelling DTV attributes driving its take up in these early years. It is interesting that the way DTV was perceived by early adopters before it entered their households matches the image promoted by the broadcaster's advertising and marketing of that period.

During the first two years, Sky was promoting the service as mainly 'multichannel', focusing on the wide range and choice of programming and highlighting the free digibox offer. It was only in 2001 (and following) campaigns that Sky digital was consistently promoted as multi-purposed, enhanced and interactive, rather than just a multichannel service. This observation suggests that there is a possible connection between Sky advertising and adopters' perceptions of its service. However, this is by no means sufficient evidence of a straightforward influence of the former to the latter.

Channel and content preferences

Despite the plethora of new thematic and general interest channels on DTV, the most popular channels remain the traditional terrestrial channels. PSB and private terrestrial channels were classified among the favourites for seven out of ten participants.

Table 3. Favourite channels

Favourite channels	%
Terrestrial free-to-air*	70.0
Film channels	60.3
Documentary/Knowledge channels	62.1
Sports channels	60.1
Entertainment channels	49.3
News channels	48.0
Music channels	39.1
Children's channels	20.1
Shopping channels	8.7
Foreign language channels	1.9

* We refer to BBC1, BBC2, Ch4 & Ch5. Sky digital was not transmitting ITV at the time the survey was conducted.
Source: Theodoropoulou, 2001.

As Table 3 shows, thematic channels also scored highly on viewers' preferences, with knowledge and documentary channels, movie channels and sports channels being the most popular. Entertainment channels of general interest follow, with half of the respondents categorising them among their favourites. Then we observe another shift towards thematic channels, with news and music channels attracting audience's interest, whereas children's, shopping and foreign language channels were less popular. Concerning viewers'

tastes for particular programmes and TV genres, the preference towards feature films is prevalent with 69.4% of respondents including them among the types of programmes they like to watch (see Table 4). Comedy and drama series scored second and fourth on viewers' preferences and sports were ranked third.

Table 4. Favourite type of content

Favourite type of content	%
Feature films	69.4
Comedy	68.6
Sports	62.3
Drama	51.3
News/current affairs	50.6
Lifestyle (cooking, travel, DIY)	46.6
History/art/culture	40.3
Music	39.6
Crime/horror	34.9
Quizzes/game shows	34.0
Soap operas	32.6
Sci-fi	29.9

Source: Theodoropoulou, 2001.

The above suggest that despite the wide programming provision of DTV, programmes and genres (like films and sports) that have traditionally been most effective in attracting audiences' attention remain the most popular content for the digital audience, as well. At the same time, however, one also should note the tendency towards customisation and focused viewers' preference in thematic programming. Interestingly, this is concurrent with the appeal of the public service broadcaster and other nationwide channels that remain a reference point for the overwhelming majority of respondents. It seems, then, that despite all the challenges brought by the digital era, PSB is capitalising on what Molsky (1999: 21-22) calls its 'assets'. These are mainly reflected in its long history and the development of a reliable brand name, which give BBC a foothold among audience members. This, along with its catering for broader audience tastes and its reputation of quality programming, help the BBC to maintain a stable share of devotees.

Use of interactive services

The use of interactive services by early Sky digital adopters is rather limited. The participants reveal a conservative approach to DTV, mainly construed as multichannel television. Most do not actively engage with the interactive services it also provides.

Sky digital interactive services can be grouped in two categories: 'contextual' and 'non-contextual'. By non-contextual I refer to Open (renamed Sky Active), the umbrella service that features TV-banking, shopping, e-mailing, games, and information services such as travelling, going out, etc. The author suggests these are non-contextual because they function outside the TV context, independently of the TV schedule, in the sense that users must interrupt their TV viewing in order to engage them. For such services, users exit the TV environment and enter another 'space', one that is similar to the Internet.

By contextual interactive services I refer to facilities featured within TV programmes, i.e., those that are incorporated into the TV content where use does not interrupt the content flow or viewing. Viewers can still watch the programmes on smaller 'window' inserts. These are also referred to as 'enhanced' services. Sky digital services in this category include the Sky Sports Active [SSA] feature, offering instant replays, match statistics, highlights and alternative camera angles of football games and other sport events and also Sky News Active which offers background and up-to-date information on various news stories, instant weather updates, etc. There is also an enhanced pay-per-view service [PPV] and numerous other interactive features incorporated in programmes which allow for information seeking, communication with producers, voting, quizzes, use of alternative camera angles, like Big Brother Interactive, BBC's Wimbledon Interactive, etc. These, depending on the nature of the programme, may have an entertainment or informative character.

The findings suggest that non-contextual services do not attract users' interest. As shown in Table 5, TV banking is extremely unpopular, and emailing is also unwelcome. TV shopping through Open is a bit more appreciated, while gaming is the most successful Open service with 21.7% of the participants using it once a month or less and 29.3% more often. Overall though, users consider such services intrusive to their TV watching.

Table 5. Frequency of use of interactive services (N = 700)

Frequency of use	Non-contextual services				Contextual services	
	Banking (%)	Shopping (%)	Emailing (%)	Games (%)	SSA (%)	PPV (%)
Frequently	3.3	4.6	4.2	29.3	37.0	13.6
Rarely	2.3	16.4	7.0	21.7	12.6	35.1
Never	94.4	79.0	88.8	49.0	50.4	51.3

Note: 'Frequently' represents the grouping of 'every day', 'some days in a week' and 'some times in a month' categories and 'Rarely' refers to the 'once a month or less' category used in the questionnaire.

Source: Theodoropoulou, 2001.

The picture changes somewhat when considering the use of contextual services. These do attract a fair share of users and are gaining audiences' support¹². Among these, SSA is quite popular since one in four respondents use

it on a weekly basis and an equal share on larger time intervals. About half of the respondents also take up PPV to order films or other programmes. The frequency of use is not high as yet, but indicative of audience's trend towards customisation of viewing. The interviews confirm that users prefer contextual interactivity because it does not hinder their simultaneous TV viewing, and on the contrary it enhances their viewing experience.

Evaluation of DTV and Internet as interfaces for interactivity

One of the reasons why subscribers do not use non-contextual services is because they are used to engaging with such practices on the Internet. Even non-Internet users tend to regard interactivity as a function of the computer, rather than TV. The findings suggest that, although many respondents do not know which of the two media is better suited for interactivity, and some believe there is no difference between them, the popularity of the Internet as a tool for interactivity is nonetheless overwhelming (see Table 6).

Table 6. Perceptions of DTV and the Internet as interfaces of interactivity concerning appropriateness, convenience of use and security (N = 700)

		DTV (%)	Internet/PC (%)	No difference (%)	Don't know (%)
Appropriate for	Banking	4.7	31.4	9.6	54.3
	Shopping	8.9	32.7	12.0	46.4
	Emailing	2.1	51.6	6.2	40.1
	Games	12.0	29.0	15.4	43.6
Easier to use for	Banking	6.1	29.2	7.1	57.6
	Shopping	13.3	28.0	9.1	49.6
	Emailing	4.1	46.7	6.1	43.1
	Games	14.3	26.6	13.1	46.0
More secure for	Banking	8.0	13.9	18.0	60.1
	Shopping	11.3	12.0	20.7	56.1
	Emailing	6.1	20.7	20.7	52.5
	Games	11.3	11.6	23.1	54.0

Note: Rows total to 100%.

Source: Theodoropoulou, 2001.

The PC is the dominant tool for e-mailing and is considered both more secure and more convenient in that respect than DTV. Games are considered rather easy to use on DTV, as 14.3% of respondents attest, even though the Internet is still higher in their preferences for 26.6%. DTV receives a more positive response concerning the sense of security in use. Particularly for

TV shopping and games it is considered as safe as the Internet. Overall, DTV scores higher on security than on issues of convenience and ease of use for interactive services. However, the trend towards perceiving the Internet as a more appropriate tool for interactivity is ubiquitous among DTV subscribers.

Conclusion: DTV is still TV

The findings of the research demonstrate that in the epoch of technological convergence, what technologically literate consumers want from DTV is more TV. The wide array of content options and increased choice are the most valued features of the new medium, whereas interactivity is not much appreciated. It can be argued of course that the limited use of interactivity is a temporary phenomenon that will decline as familiarization with DTV grows, as technology advances, as interactive choices increase and as new generations of DTV users develop. Yet, the fact that the early adopters, i.e. the people who are attracted to novelty and act as the gatekeepers by which it enters society (Rogers, 1962), have such a conservative view of DTV as mainly TV implies something quite important. Consumers perceive convergence in ways that differ significantly from views advanced by the industry and innovators.

Users tend to prefer entertainment-oriented services (games) and those enhancing their viewing experience (contextual), rather than administrative or work related services (banking) and other non-contextual services. They thus make a selective and qualitative use of the new features, however limited, primarily to 'upgrade' their televised experience. Yet, most do not use their TV as a PC and have clear perceptions about what functions each medium should have. Both quantitative and qualitative findings strongly suggest that for the majority of DTV users, TV and the PC/Internet are quite different media with clearly separated functions.

Swann offers a relevant observation in noting that "Consumers are more comfortable with the TV than the PC, particularly at home. The TV conveys relaxation; the PC is associated with work" (2000: 12). It has almost become a truism to argue that TV is perceived as an entertainment medium, warm and easy to use in the friendly context of the living room, whereas the PC is mainly conceived as an information medium that requires user skill and active engagement and is principally used for work and administrative purposes. However this is typically the way the two media are received by many DTV users.

So, although technological convergence between the PC and TV is happening, consumer convergence is not happening just yet. For users, the two media remain two separate devices, which they approach in different modes (Allen, 1998) and use in different contexts. As Stipp further notes, "Information, entertainment, and relaxation are different, enduring needs – they don't automatically converge because technology is converging" (1999: 11).

It is therefore crucial to observe that television is not merely a technical system. More fundamentally and importantly it is a cultural practice (Silverstone, 1994) associated with deeply established patterns of 'habitual' use (McGougan, 1999). Use habits are beginning to change as viewers are offered more choice and adopt practices to customise their viewing, but consumers' perceptions are not – TV offers entertainment and relaxation through the viewing practice. Although some DTV users are starting to manipulate TV content and use contextual interactivity, such services are celebrated for adding amusement tints and elevating the viewing practice. They are used occasionally as secondary features complementary to the programming.

In conclusion, early DTV users waver between traditional patterns of viewing and new patterns of use. They still like PSB channels, sports, and films, yet they also watch thematic content. They do not use non-contextual interactivity, yet some make use of contextual services. Early DTV users reject interactivity when it detracts from those very qualities they associate with TV – watching programmes, being entertained and being relaxed. As, a young, well-educated, wealthy interviewee and keen user of new technologies, said:

Television is for watching television. If you want to do anything else, you have other ways of doing it, whether it's the Internet, whether it's email on the computer, or even the telephone to ring somebody. If you are watching programmes, to go out of it into something interactive, really takes you away from watching the television...Television is there as a relaxing tool. You get home in the evening and it's there to entertain you. In effect, you have to actually physically do something if you're interactive, rather than the relaxing element of it, which is what television basically is. (Keith, 30)

Thus consumer convergence is not likely to take place just because the industry and technology is ready for that, and promoting it. As Livingstone puts it "which media succeed in dominating the market...depends more on their social shaping and contexts of use than on their technological capacities per se" (1999: 60). Broadcasting is changing, of course. But programming and content is still most valued by most. DTV users who use it as a multi-purposed device are slowly increasing, and yet non-interactive modes of engagement with TV are still the predominant pattern.

One important and too often neglected factor in studies about converging media is what their predecessors have bequeathed the public. In this sense further research on both traditional and new media is keenly needed if we are to understand whether and why consumer behaviour convergence will take place and, if so, how and why.

Notes

1. The research is part of my PhD on the diffusion and adoption of digital TV among the first generation of the digital audience in the UK, at the Sociology Department, Media@lse, London School of Economics and Political Science. For more information please contact Vivi Theodoropoulou at P.Theodoropoulou@lse.ac.uk
2. UK Digital Passes 8 Million Marker, 07.08.01. Retrieved from http://www.dtg.org.uk/news/uknews/8_million.htm
3. Sky Now Have 6.1 Million Subscribers, 01.08.01. Retrieved from http://www.dth.org.uk/news/uknews/-sky_results_802.htm
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5. NTL Hits Refinancing Snag, 28.03.02. Retrieved from http://www.dtg.org.uk/news/uknews/-ntl_refinance.htm. Buoyant Telewest Hit by Charge, 04.03.02. Retrieved from http://www.dtg.org.uk/reference/company_briefs/telewest.htm
6. ITVDigital is Born, 11-12.07.01. Retrieved from http://www.dtg.org.uk/news/uknews/itv_digital_launch.htm
7. ITV Digital Closes Down, 01.05.02. Retrieved from http://www.org.uk/news/uknews/itv_dig_closes.htm
8. A stratified sample of 15 interviewees was designed based on the following criteria: length of subscription, status of subscriber (new or old to multichannel TV), use of interactive services, and household structure.
9. Source: The Digital Viewers Survey, July 2000, BMRB International. We should note here that caution is needed in the interpretation of these comparisons between the two surveys, for the reason that they used different samples. BMRB had a response base of 500 adults who have DTV in their house while our research surveyed 700 adult Sky digital subscribers. The BMRB figures reported here are for Sky digital viewers.
10. At a national level the figures for 2000 show that 99% of the UK households own a TV set (source: General Household Survey 2000, Office for National Statistics). The results of our research (2001) show that not only 100% of participating households own a TV set, but also that 90% of these are multiple TV households. The ownership of VCRs at a national level for 2000 is 88% whereas in the Sky digital households participating in the survey the figure rises to 97.3%, with 55.1% of these possessing more than one. 81.9% of Sky digital households participating in the survey have mobile phones, while the average figure for the UK population is 58%.
11. Source: General Household Survey 2000, Office for National Statistics.
12. A variety of contextual services were launched after the survey was conducted and were only discussed in the interviews. See also: Big Brother an Interactive Hit, 19.06.01. Retrieved from <http://www.dtg.org.uk/new/index.html> (UK News), and 4.5 million Tennis and Golf fans Experience Interactive TV, 13.08.01. Retrieved from <http://www.dtg.org.uk/new/index.html> (UK News).

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Appendix

*Channels and Services available on Sky digital**

Sky digital offers approximately 240 channels. Subscription prices vary between £10 and £36 per month depending on the number and type of channels included in the package. Among others, the following channels are on offer:

Entertainment channels

Sky One, E4, ITV2, UK Gold, UK Gold 2, Bravo, Living, Granada Plus, Challenge, Paramount Comedy, UK Drama, Discovery Home & Leisure, Sky-Fi Channel, UK Style, UK Style +, Hallmark, QVC, Granada Men & Motors, UK Travel, UK Food, Play UK, Discovery Health

Sports channels

Sky Sports 1, Sky Sports 2, Sky Sports 3, Sky Sports Extra

Movie channels

Sky Premier, Sky Cinema, Sky Movie Max, Disney channels

News & Documentary channels

Discovery Channel, Discovery Travel & Adventure, Discovery Civilisation, CNBC, Discovery Animal Planet, Discovery Sky-Trek, Discovery Wings, Sky News, Fox News, National Geographic, The History Channel, Biography, UK Horizons, Adventure 1, Bloomberg

Music channels

MTV, MTV Base, MTV Hits, VH1, VH1 Classic, MTV2, MTV Dance, The Box, Kiss, Q, Smash Hits, Magic, The Saint, Big Blue, Rampage

Childrens' channels

Nickelodeon, Nickelodeon Replay, Nickelodeon Junior, Cartoon Network, Cartoon Network Plus, Discovery Kids, Fox Kids, Trouble

Free to air channels

BBC1, BBC2, BBC Choice, BBC parliament, BBC 4, BBC News 24, CBBC, Cbeebies, ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5

Pay channels

FilmFour, Disney Channels, Artsworld, Music Choice Extra, Star TV, Chelsea TV

Radio stations

BBC, Classic FM, Classic Gold, Virgin, Capital Gold, The Mix, Planet Rock, Xfm, Heart FM, Core, Youthfm.com, WRN Euro Max

(Non-contextual) Interactive Services

Sky Active (Open) offered free to all subscribers

Shopping (with retailers such as WHS, Asda, CPW, Comet, Dixons, Dominos Pizza etc.

Banking (users how hold accounts with HSBC, Abbey National, The Woolwich or Egg can check their bank or credit card accounts, set direct debits, transfer money etc.)

Emailing

Games (classic games, action games, quizzes and puzzles. Top scorers can win prizes)

Information (provided by UpMyStreet, Yellow Pages, UK Phonebook, Cinema Listings)

Sports Betting (for users over 18)

Holidays (opportunities to book a holiday with Going Places, Thomascook.com, First choice etc.)

Additional services

Other interactive features and new technological facilities introduced in the Sky digital package include: a facility that allows text messaging to mobile phones through the TV with the use of Sky remote control or keypad; the Personal Planner that allows viewers to create their own personalised TV schedules; and Sky+ (TiVo), which costs £300 and automatically records what the viewers are watching, allows them to pause and replay live programmes, automatically eliminates adverts, and stores up to 30 hours of recorded programming.

* Source: <http://www.sky.com/skycom/getsky>

Co-Evolution of Broadcast, Customized and Community-Created Media

Marko Turpeinen

The roles of broadcast media and telecommunication media are being redefined as the diffusion of new forms of interactive media progresses. The broadcasting model has clear advantages in rapidly and ubiquitously spreading information and other content to large audiences, and in quickly building brand recognition. However, this synchronous media consumption model is challenged by new technology that promotes more fragmented and asynchronous media usage patterns. For example, digital television receivers and personal video recorders, such as *TiVo* or *Replay*, allow flexible local caching and customization of digital media content.

Simultaneously, people are gradually taking more active roles in seeking digital information and entertainment, participating in shared virtual environments, and becoming producers of media content. New forms of customized media and group communication enabled by the Internet are fundamentally different compared with traditional mass media communications.

There are signs signaling the emergence of more demanding and technologically empowered citizens and media customers. They demand new kinds of media content and services, but the role of traditional media in this process is largely to be defined. Therefore, the media companies are struggling to understand:

- how to better manage and deliver media content,
- how to provide better content and services for individual citizens,
- how active groups and communities operate in the digital context,
- how media professionals could support community activity, and
- how the media industry could benefit from this activity.

This chapter discusses three applications of media and communications technology and their impact on public service broadcasting: 1) *dynamic content customization*, 2) *community-oriented publishing*, and 3) *community content networks*. The discussion is illustrated with example projects in which the author has participated at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology [MIT].

Communities and social commodities

On the World Wide Web, active, participating and creative individuals and communities have created a wealth of media content of wide variety in type and quality. Personal home pages, web logs and community sites reflect the interests and characteristics of individuals and collaborative groups. At the same time, the scope of the peer-to-peer content sharing is demonstrated by hundreds of millions of files forming a massively distributed database of petabytes of data. Unlike the centralized distribution model, with Internet-based media servers providing simultaneous streaming of content to large audiences, the peer-to-peer model scales well to millions of participants.

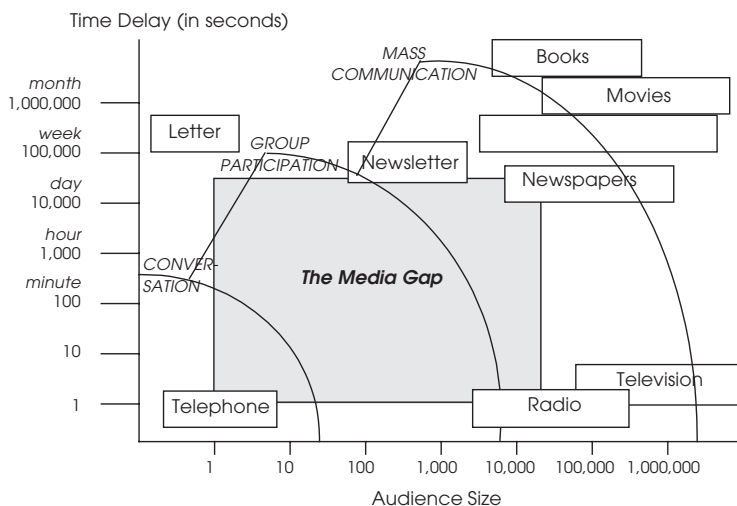
The flexibility of networked hypermedia characteristic of the Web combined with these vast content repositories of peer-to-peer indicates great potential for interactivity and customization. With widely used Internet-centered applications, the computer is not just a task-oriented utility tool but also a communication tool suited to a wide variety of needs. As Winograd (1996) writes:

The computer (with its attendant peripherals and networks) is a machine for communicating all kinds of information in all kinds of media, with layers of structuring and interaction that could not be provided by traditional print, graphic, or broadcast media.

Thus, information isn't only data – it is also a social commodity that flows among individuals, and between communities at different levels of scale. Computer-mediated networking can reinforce existing physical communities, and help build entirely new communities (Bender et al., 1996; Castells, 2001; Fischer, 1998; Schuler 1996).

Mind the gap

In 1980, Tetsuro Tomita of Japan's Ministry of Posts and Telecommunication proposed the diagram depicted in Figure 1 (Tomita, 1980). The horizontal axis organizes media according to the size of the audience while the vertical dimension shows the delay in seconds between the event in real life and its appearance as a media product. Most media products have been geared towards large audiences, the only exception being small circulation printed newsletters and periodicals, which typically are either non-profit ventures or very targeted business or scientific publications. *The Media Gap* identifies an area in which the needs of relatively fast-paced group communications are not met by traditional media. Tomita claimed that computer-mediated electronic communications ultimately fills this gap.

Figure 1. The Media Gap, adapted from Neuman, 1991

Different forms of electronic group participation – discussion boards, newsgroups, mailing lists, chats, blogs, web sites – exist for professions, hobbies and interests of all sorts. Most of these forums are open to public around the globe. This phenomenon challenges professional journalists to find new ways to build relationships between media producers and active communities.

It is common for media organizations to embrace group participation by providing ‘community billboards’ or ‘community sections’ on their sites. However, the potential for co-beneficial relationship between professional media content producers and active community publishers has not been fully realized. Different modes of group participation are often considered by the traditional media as something to be tamed and moderated. The motivation for increased control is mostly due to the issues regarding immaterial rights and potential liability for community-created content.

Customized media content

Digital media allow for unprecedented flexibility in media content creation, access, interactivity and customization. Internet-based customized media content can serve the special needs of individuals, as well as small, and often geographically dispersed, communities.

With the Web, the amount of available information content is growing extremely rapidly. Online media content can be expanded with background

information and explanation, and search tools make vast quantities of related information instantly available to information explorers. As expansive content becomes easily accessible through a hyperlink or search engine, the volume of information can become overwhelming. In this world of abundant easily accessible information, the need for orientation and guidance becomes more apparent. Customized forms of information selection and presentation increase the perceived relevance of media content, and provide new and potentially more efficient tools for learning and creation of new knowledge.

Traditional mass media channels have not been amenable to efficient customization. At best, these media have only been able to tailor content to reflect perspectives of a local community within the parameters used in market segmentation strategies. Internet-based technologies for content management and personalization introduce a new set of tools for serving individuals and communities of much wider variation in sizes and types. For example, news content can be customized by filtering a subset of available news stories for the reader, or by augmenting selected news stories with personally relevant related material or illustrative comparisons as stipulated by the user.

Media customization can be approached from following three viewpoints (Turpeinen, 2000a):

1. *what is customized?*

- *content* can be selected, grouped, and organized,
- *presentation* can be tailored to suit the needs and preferences of the individual, and
- *delivery methods* can be tailored by media platform capabilities, update time and frequency, and cost.

2. *for whom is the customization done?*

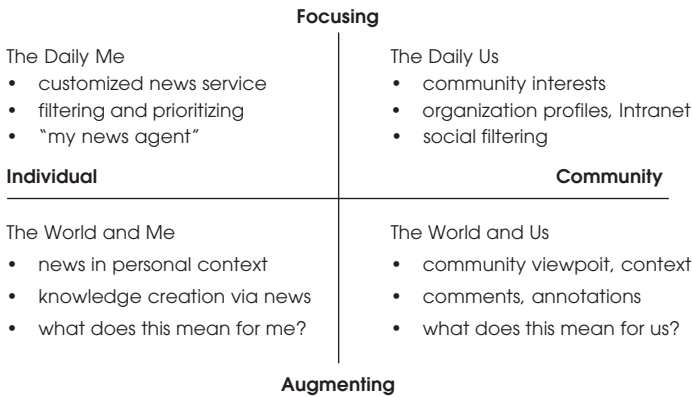
- *individual*: content or service is personalized according to a user model (or a user profile), and
- *community*: content or service is customized for a group based on a community model (or a community profile).

3. *how is media content customized?*

- *focusing*: selecting or prioritizing the media content to best match the user's interests and needs; the goal is to minimize media customer's information overflow, and
- *augmenting*: contextualizing content and services in a tailored manner to best fit the material to the media customer's previous history, experience and current situation.

This categorization is further illustrated in Figure 2 using news content as an example. Information focusing includes filtering and prioritizing of news items. This kind of service is often portrayed as a 'personal news agent' that brings most relevant news items to the individual's attention. However, one of the possible negative implications of personal content filtering is the loss

Figure 2. Customizing news content (Turpeinen, 2000a)



of a shared experience among community members. Without a common base of reference, news items are not shared, debated, and discussed like the common headline news of traditional media.

Malone et. al. (1987) argued that although users are often viewed as independent entities, they usually operate in a social context and are likely to share a significant portion of their interests with other users. Community-oriented customized news service can serve the specific interests of a group. Corporate Intranet news with filtered information on topics of interest is an example of a focusing service for communities.

Information augmentation is specifically designed to enhance understanding of content. With news stories, augmenting means adding explanations to existing articles, so augmentation is a way to provide context and background to news events. Augmenting complements focusing as the reader receives personally contextualized news. Customized augmentation increases the relevance of news by showing connections and comparisons keyed to a reader's history and current knowledge. Community-based news augmentation means contextualizing news stories with additional community-specific information.

Customization is always based on some model of an individual or a community. The customization can be directly controlled by the user, or it can be based on observations of users' behavior. A user model is a computer-accessible presentation of information about an individual regarding specified domains of use. This user model can consist of some or all of the following:

- data explicitly given by the user for the purposes of modeling,
- implicit observations of users' behavior, and
- inferred data about the user (for example, assumed market segment the user belongs to).

Privacy is one of the main social and technical challenges underlying any system that customizes media content for individual users. Typically, media companies and service providers provide explicitly stated privacy guidelines for the use of personal information. However, this requires a high level of trust from the user. The privacy issues in personalization are also dependent on the physical storage location of personal information. For example, in the case of TiVo, the profile used for customization is stored locally on the user's device. Also, there are technical mechanisms for providing pseudonymous service in which the user has persistent and verified digital identity and profile, but the actual identity of the individual is not known (Brands, 2000).

Community modeling

Community modeling can be used to model the collective group. Community is not static – new members can arrive and existing members can leave at any time, but there is a sense of belonging to a group of individuals, and the group is relatively stable (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Instead of communities defined solely by geographic region or by joint interest, the web-enabled communities are often *communities of practice* that engage in a joint enterprise via mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998). Most communities engage in some degree of collective cognition – the interactions through which they learn from one another's experiences, set common strategies, develop a shared vocabulary, evolve common norms and means, and evolve a distinctive and shared way of thinking (Agre, 1998).

The term 'community' is often considered very positively, almost idealistically, as a situation in which people coexist peacefully and mutually support each other (Wenger, 1998). However, there are typically disagreements, tensions, and conflicts among the members. This is important when considering community-oriented or -focused services. Differing goals often cause conflicts inside the community, but conflict may sometimes be as important as cooperation in obtaining issue resolutions. Joint goals of the community can also be harmful to the larger community and to the society (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Wenger, 1998). Community can also be seen as a limitation as it often becomes inward-oriented and even hostile to other groups.

Community modeling has some significant advantages over individual user modeling: the contents of the model are negotiated in a social setting and are more likely to remain more static over time (Elo, 1995; Milosavljevic, 1997).

Active community publishers

Active individuals and communities use computer-mediated networking to tell and exchange their stories and to enhance the interaction among the

members and their peers in other groups. Community publishing is about 'grassroots activity' by groups that produce narrative content. In contrast to chatting, bulletin board discussion, or role-play, community publishing is therefore a constructionist activity specifically aimed at storytelling and sharing experiences in a community setting, as well as learning and using new skills regarding publishing.

The *Silver Stringers* project, initiated in 1996 by the MIT Media Lab, is an attempt to understand how electronic tools can enhance community life, especially among the elderly. Senior citizens have a vast store of memories, an understanding of the community dynamics, and a deep-rooted connection to the places where they have lived and worked. The Silver Stringers project taps into those attributes in developing new paths for community journalism.

The 'original' Silver Stringers are based at the Milano Senior Center in Melrose, Massachusetts. This group of 30 senior citizens has published *The Melrose Mirror* (<http://silverstringer.media.mit.edu>) on the Web since August 1996. The enabling tools and infrastructure have provided the Silver Stringers a new channel for telling their stories. In the past five years, their online publication has grown into a collection of more than 1000 stories produced by the group members.

The Junior Journal (<http://journal.jrsummit.net>) is a Web site published by a group of children and teenagers that emerged from the Junior Summit event held at the MIT Media Lab in November 1998. The majority of stories in the Junior Journal are on topics related to ideology, explorations of their own and other cultures, and ideas and projects directed toward changing the world.

Some of results and lessons learned in these two projects were that (Turpeinen, 2000b):

- *All communities are different:* Communities are like individuals; they have unique personalities. The contents and the style of publication reflect a community's identity, interests, geography, history, and demographics. Community publishing practices also vary widely across groups.
- *Support multiple roles and subgroups inside the community:* Over time, members specialize differently: some specialize in tools and technology, some act as bridge builders between communities, some like to stay on the periphery of the activity, and some typically emerge as leaders taking more responsibility for the summative activity. It is important to be prepared to accommodate all these emerging roles.
- *Provide strong sense of ownership:* It should be clear to the community members that they own the publication. The community members should be in control and make the decisions
- *Emphasize thinking before publishing:* Storytelling and community-journalism should be seen as *a tool to think with* in a group setting.

The enabling tools should help support and encourage collaborative editing, commenting, and peer-review.

- *Tools should be flexible and expandable:* Because there is no 'one size that fits all' community, the members should be able to figure out their own publishing processes over time. The tools must be flexible enough to accommodate the specific needs of each community in terms of self-organizing the flow of work and assigning the tasks and responsibilities among its members.

The *Silver Stringers* and *Junior Journalist* projects thus demonstrate how electronic community publishing can result in a meaningful and entertaining addition to traditional publishing. The community publishers have members with stories to tell, and they like to gain new skills in telling those stories. Active, participating and creative individuals and communities are using this opportunity to explore shared history through narrative, photography, audio, video, and other forms of artistic expression.

One of the issues with voluntary online communities of interest is that often their members do not make a lasting commitment to the community. This is mostly due to the lack of mutual obligation because these communities emphasize personal interests and it is often easy to choose to exit the community as a response to discontent and dissatisfaction (Galston, 1999). So in the case of active community publishers, common goals, mutual obligation, and shared responsibility are significant determinants of community success (Turpeinen, 2000b).

Community connections

The growth of active content producing communities has led to the need for new and different tools to facilitate interaction between communities. Community publishers devote their time and energy to producing potentially valuable (to others) content on the Internet. The problem is that electronic publications often remain isolated pockets of content because the existing tools for indexing, searching, and integrating Web content are not geared to inter-linking community activities. Thus, new tools and services are needed to build bridges across community boundaries by comparing the works of various community publishers and by introducing members of different communities to each other.

'Recommendation systems' using 'collaborative information filtering' techniques categorize users automatically into 'neighborhoods' based on similarities between user profiles. The tools use these neighborhoods to recommend new items to similar users, or to recommend users to each other (Shardanand and Maes, 1995; Resnick and Varian, 1999). A similar approach is used in a system called the *SilverWire*, which is a community-based 'grass-

roots' newswire system that is simultaneously a resource and tool for inter-connecting community publishers on the Web (Turpeinen, 2000b). Instead of a recommendation system based on the individual characteristics of the community members, this alternative system clusters the participating communities according to similarity of created stories and uses this clustering as a basis for recommendations.

Although communities have been profiled from several perspectives – for example a psychological sense of a community (Chavis et al., 1986) or the socio-economic profiles of local communities – there is not much literature on methods regarding community modeling from the point of view of their joint practice. Community modeling in the SilverWire context entails defining a way of describing a community involved in a publishing activity. This should be done in a manner that allows comparisons between communities. Three main dimensions that characterize the community publishers and its activity are *purpose*, *community identity*, and *communication* (Turpeinen, 2000b).

The purpose of using community modeling in the SilverWire is to go beyond the standard 'crawl, index and search' approach in finding relevant material on the Web. This is achieved by augmenting the community-created content with community profiles and showing comparisons between community profile data.

Specially designed tools that collect and build community models can facilitate the process of building trusted relationships between communities. Barrett and Maglio (1999) use the term *intermediary* to describe a computational element that lies between an information producer and an information consumer on an information stream. Intermediaries can produce new information by injecting it into the stream, enhance the information that is flowing along the stream, and connect multiple streams. Conceptually, the *SilverWire* system is a Web intermediary that facilitates and augments the communication between community publishers.

Implications for journalism and broadcasting

New forms of media services are based on long-lasting relationships between media content providers and information- and entertainment-seeking customers. The Internet is driving towards a decentralized and community-oriented mode of publishing, and media organizations are thereby losing their traditional position as the sole gatekeeper of information.

Increasingly, the role of media companies in a networked society is to understand community needs, and then to act as a mediator between communities. The professional journalist may take the more traditional role as moderators of horizontal communication among audiences.

The media producer can facilitate this exchange by supporting the interchange of content and ideas. New tools for community communications can

also provide a way for conventional media companies to better serve community needs, for example by integrating professionally created information feeds with community publications.

The media companies that position themselves as community organizers are also bound to benefit from that role financially. There are viable market opportunities for advertising and electronic commerce for community organizers. These will act as connecting nodes providing loci of attention and recognition for various sorts of communities. Providing a voice in the electronic arena for community members also reinforces the brand of a media company. On the other hand, there can be new, still to be discovered, business models for media companies.

Traditional broadcasting companies should be prepared for more demanding customers, and to engage their audience with community-created content. The media companies have an advantage if they can creatively combine the skills of professional journalists with customized services in innovative ways that meet the special needs of individuals and small communities.

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Cross Media and (Inter)Active Media Use A Situated Perspective

Pirkko Raudaskoski & Tove Arendt Rasmussen

When future broadcasting is discussed and planned, it is vital to understand what the current media consumption looks like in order for the policy makers to undertake more informed decisions within the field of convergent digital media. In theory and already to some extent in practice, these new media are a hybrid between the TV and computer. Instead of regarding the present use of these two media as unquestionable or even uninteresting in the face of the convergent media, we find that it is important to understand how these commonplace media are used within families at the present time.

In this chapter we concentrate on two aspects of contemporary practices of TV viewing and computer usage in Danish homes, and introduce two methods of researching those issues: 1) How do Danes (in Northern Jutland) organise their everyday life around TV and computer media (interactivity as a daily pattern)? This question will be answered through interview research; and 2) How could the interactivity of the TV and computer be theorised from the perspective of use (interactivity as an emergent property)? Video analysis will suit this approach because interactivity is regarded as a social and observable matter (1). Although our data come from Danish families, we contend these data have more general relevance and suggest our treatment should be understood as a demonstration of broader theoretical and methodological arguments.

Another reason for our research is that consumers/citizens seem to be marginalised in the present broadcast and convergence discussion, and therefore we want to bring them more forcefully into the picture through studies that are inspired by ethnography. What we have embraced, however, is not just a repetition of what has been done before. We do not only want to investigate stories about how recent technologies have been adopted and applied. We also want to study traditional media use, such as TV watching, with new theoretical understandings and methodologies. We discuss the fundamental theoretical and methodological challenges in the convergent media landscape by introducing a common framework for understanding any media/technology use (Raudaskoski, 2001).

When we discuss interactivity we do not start from media systems and patterns in the information traffic, even if these topics are of importance to the overall project from which we derive our data (see note 1). Instead, we start with the social situation in which interactivity is an issue. In an interview, people give accounts ('make sense') of what they regard as interactive, whereas in their (observed) everyday actions, people constitute interactivity in the situation through their everyday social processes of watching TV or using a computer (Raudaskoski, 2002). In the latter case, the participants show to each other through their talk and other action how they make sense of the situation. This sense-making is part of any human action that unfolds in time and space – it is done through moment-by-moment participation in the world and is therefore sequential.

In this chapter we delve into the concept of interactivity as understood from the perspective of the actions that the users undertake at or with the media. Thus we take a closer look at the reception side of broadcasting and convergence, suggesting a situated user/viewer –oriented approach to gain a better understanding of what happens in Danish homes and about future possibilities that could grow from that knowledge.

Interactivity: What enables this interaction now?

We wish to take the discussion about interactivity away from it being either a feature of the technology or of the user/viewer and instead regard interactivity as something that is constituted *in situ*, similarly to how Suchman (2001), with reference to such theorists as Haraway and Latour, discusses the topic. Suchman wants to keep the difference between the two categories of technology and human, while acknowledging that agency – and therefore interactivity – “reside(s) neither in us nor in our artefacts, but in our intra-actions” (Suchman, 2001: 7). When we act, the action has to do with intelligibility, our understanding of the world, and, unlike machines, we are responsible for the consequences of our actions.

Be it a human or technologised entity that acts – the traditional way of understanding agency argues there has to be an individual that is interacting. This assumption can also be found in some of the early concepts within media studies, namely parasocial interaction (Horton & Wohl, 1986 [1956]), which refers to cases where the TV host “interacts with” the viewers at home, who consequently regard him or her as their “friend”.

When interactivity is defined from the point of view of “intra-action”, i.e. from the perspective of the people’s contingent interpretations of the technology in question, it can be tangled with wanting to define people’s interactions with each other as the ideal realisation of interactivity. People’s interactions are assumed to be the yardstick by which we should evaluate what counts as interaction between people and technology. In this view, peoples’

mutual interactions would decide which machines deserve to be labelled 'interactive'. Of course we recognise that people may interact 'with' the machine in ways that resemble interacting with a human being, but that is not all that's at stake (cf. parasocial interaction). Through engaging in an activity that resembles interaction with another human being, the viewer/reader/user is constructing the agency of the technology, and thereby constituting the artefact as interactive.

We could compare this situation to an adult talking to a baby: the baby's reactions are taken as an intelligible part of the interaction even if the baby would only be gesturing and making sounds haphazardly. What matters is that from the adult's perspective, a meaningful encounter took place. With adult-adult interaction the mutuality of sense making is essential, however, and we cannot 'switch off' from an interaction without consequences. With TV and computers, there might be specific attempts at "virtual mutuality" (e.g. questions being asked directly to home audiences). Also, in genres such as talk shows (Bruun, 2001) and reality TV (Rasmussen, 2001a) the viewer is very often constructed as a sociable participant, as a judge or co-player in games or quizzes (Syvertsen, 2002). However, there are no consequences – so far – if the home audience does not choose engage in that interaction.

When people encounter the Internet through their computer screens and keyboards, mice or pointing pens, the screens offer different resources for action and intelligibility than the TV screen. The multimodal nature of the interface means that not only are texts read or typed in, but also icons, pictures, and videos can be seen on the interface, some of them appearing in an interactive fashion because of the design of the program. In this situation, the possibilities for action vary not only between different modes but also within one genre. In most chat rooms, for example, not only does the screen allow discussion with other people in real time, but past chat is also readable on the screen or with a click on the scroll bar. So, the same screen offers possibilities for observable physical interaction and also passive monitoring or reading. By 'active' and 'passive' we refer to the observable actions and activities of the user-viewers, not to mental activity or emotional 'inner' responses. Because TV also allows for observable action, this means any categorisation of TV viewing as something inherently passive and Internet/computer use as always active must be suspended and a closer look taken at what is actually happening in those activities.

To be able to discuss more precisely how different environments influence and become part of the ongoing interaction, and thus sense-making, a short introduction to the basic conception of interaction and interpretation from an interactionist perspective is useful.

Interaction cum interpretation, with or without media/technology

Interpretation and interaction are sometimes regarded as different, distinct practices that should be studied by separate fields: Interpretation 'belongs' to media and cultural studies while interaction 'belongs' to communication studies. However, it is possible to combine these in interaction analysis because the interactional sequence is ultimately one in which interpretations are expressed and checked. If this is accepted as a definition for interaction, then we could posit that: *The interactivity of technology instigates, helps, or mediates the interpretative process.*

As shown by conversation analysis, when two or more people are involved, sequential interpretation concerns mainly the others' interpretations of one's own contributions that are checked in and through the ongoing interaction (2). If these contributions are mediated, then the technology (audio, visual; synchronous, asynchronous) affects the way the interpretative work happens because the resources for sense-making are different.

Alasuutari (1999) discusses three phases of audience studies, all of which use interviews as an important research tool. The first is reception research, which started with Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model; the second was audience ethnography; and the third is a constructionist view. In the third approach the focus has been, among other things, on how TV viewers construct themselves as an audience. According to Alasuutari, the approach to audience studies in the second phase became more sociological, and the interest in the (cognitive event) of interpretation (or reception) faded away. Instead of regarding interpretation as either a strictly cognitive phenomenon or a broader cultural issue, in our research into interaction and interactivity we want to address, through detailed data analysis, how both culture and interpretation can emerge in action. We also want to investigate how the audience members in their interactions with each other and with the programme construct the viewing/using activity as intelligible. Therefore, not only is the achieved order and sense of interaction of interest, but also the very 'technique' of interaction.

The sequential interpretation through which all interactions take place has certain characteristics, as shown by conversation analysis. In conversations, people constitute and check intelligibility through turn taking – every turn takes the situation forward but at the same time provides an interpretation of the previous turn. Some turns are special in that they require another for a two-pair sequence to be completed. These are called 'adjacency pairs' (for example, greeting-greeting, question-answer). If sequential interpretation is the basic means of sense-making, then it is important to be aware of these features when mapping the resources for media users' interpretation work. In this way interaction analysis provides a framework for studying both traditional media and computer media. Instead of regarding the 'reception' of television and the 'use' of the computer as different practices that should be

researched with different methods (reception and human-computer interaction studies), one approach can be employed.

Also, interaction analysis provides a framework for researching interactions at and with media. Intelligibility, the sense-making work, can be studied from a fairly mechanistic perspective, but it also is possible to look at more culture-related issues, both within the media texts and in their reception. We also find it useful to situate our interviews and video observations in a more overall framework, for instance that of mediated discourse analysis (Scollon, 2001) within which the link between situated practices and society/culture is made theoretically and methodologically clear. Scollon wants to understand human action from a holistic perspective. Actions are always realized through mediation and therefore with mediational means (e.g. language, TV, computer screen and the material setting of the room) in a community of practice (e.g. family) or in a nexus of practice (e.g. watching football in a pub). Various situations provide different possibilities for action, depending on the communicative resources (mediational means): A TV or a computer enables different actions around them, but those actions cannot be completely defined beforehand. Instead, real-world situations have to be studied.

Relation to (mass media) communication

Since Shannon and Weaver, in mass (media) communication research the message, its sender, and its receiver have been theorised as focal points. Bordewijk and Kaam's typology of telematic services was also based on the variables of sender and receiver: transmission (one-directional from the sender), consultation (the receiver can choose what to view), registration (the sender's initiative is completed by the receiver), and conversation (the sender and the receiver exchange information on an equal basis).

Jens F. Jensen (1999) has suggested a typology of interactivity in media that is based on Bordewijk and Kaam, but which places their dimensions (and the counterparts) in a 3-D structure. Jensen concludes that interactivity can be measured as "media's potential ability to let the user exert an influence on the content and/or form of the mediated communication" (p.59), which then makes it possible for him to position various technologies in an 'interactivity cube' model. Thus interactivity is a feature of the technology: it affords user manipulation. However, Jensen wants to keep the concepts of "interaction" and "interactivity" separate – the former being defined sociologically as "actions of two or more individuals observed to be mutually interdependent" (Duncan, 1989: 325). But, as indicated above, we want to claim that if we substitute "individuals" with "entities" in Duncan's definition of interaction, the humanness is not the issue. What happens in an encounter is the issue. Thus, the interesting question becomes: How does

the user-viewer actually make use of the media’s potential for interaction, and therefore how does the user constitute the interactivity of the media?

Van Dijk (1999) also refers to Bordewijk and Kaam’s definition as a basic division. He lists levels or quality of interactivity according to the following criteria: 1) two-sided communication (space), 2) synchronicity (time), 3) control (of interactional behaviour), and 4) content (understanding). According to him, 1 is the lowest possible level of interactivity, whereas all the four together indicate the highest level, something that only humans can really achieve. As Bordewijk and Kaam have the sender and the receiver as important variables, their model – and its follow-ups – can be reworded from a more interaction-based point of view, even if the terms ‘sender’ and ‘receiver’ are regarded as “participants”. So, from an “interpretation cum interaction” viewpoint, the Bordewijk and Kaam taxonomy could be reformulated:

Table 1.

Transmission	The flow of the text from the centre, and therefore the local interpreter has to adjust actions to the flow.
Consultation	The local interpreter has control over what to read and in which sequential order.
Registration	The initiative for the action comes from the centre; the action is completed by the local interpreter (an adjacency pair).
Conversation	A sequential, minimum two party interaction in which interpretations are performed and checked through turn-taking.

In this reformulation it is clear that the emphasis is on the local interpreter: the person watching TV or using the Internet has different resources for action in each of the four scenarios. If we then compare van Dijk’s levels of interactivity with the sequential conception of social interaction, we can see that his list covers various aspects of the interaction process. But those aspects are hard to separate in practice (both that of the participant and that of the analyst). For example, interaction takes place in physical surroundings by embodied people (van Dijk’s Space); the interaction is sequential, and can take place synchronously or asynchronously (van Dijk’s Time); and the interpretative work (van Dijk’s Understanding) is done through turn taking (van Dijk’s Control).

So, in all types of interaction and media use, interpretation takes place. The task is to find out precisely how those turn-takings are shaped when they take place at the TV or computer, be it via talking to other user/viewers or interacting ‘with’ somebody on a screen. The level of interactivity or amount of interaction is not so much the issue, but instead whether and how interaction is possible in the first place. So there is no need to differentiate *a priori* between, for instance, consuming (TV) and searching for (Internet) information because empirical studies must show whether and how those interpretative modes differ from each other for the participants involved. In

the video observation, we are after the viewer-user's local, situated, and public interpretations, whereas interviews can give us access to their reflections over the issues.

Thus an interactionist re-reading of Bordewijk and Kaam, and also of van Dijk, reveals the importance of understanding the general possibilities that people have in different situations of media use. In the human-computer interaction literature, these resources are often referred to as affordances (what can be done) and constraints (what is not possible). However, media scholars that draw on Bordewijk and Kaam tend to be stuck with what, in Norman's (1988) terms, could be called "*real affordances*" – namely, what are the built-in possibilities for action or manipulation? In contrast, what matters in our understanding of interactivity is the "*perceived affordances*". For example, the viewer-user can still 'interact with' a traditional broadcast transmission, even if this interactivity is not a 'real affordance'. From the interactionist view, one important difference between consultation and conversation is that it is only in the latter case that both of the participants take responsibility for the meanings that are being shaped in the situated interaction. So, even if, in the traditional TV broadcast situation, people are often interacting with each other in the studio or parasocially with the viewer, they can escape the local consequentiality or responsibility of their actions in relation to the viewers' interpretations as the two settings are separate from each other.

Consuming media/technology at home

In the following we discuss briefly the main methodological points and results of the two types of empirical inquiry: interview and video research. As mentioned in the introduction, the studies were undertaken to gain a better understanding of the everyday practices of present media use in Danish homes. The first study used interviews as a way to find out more about the everyday media consumption of the interviewees, and the second concentrates – through video observation and detailed action analysis – on what types of emergent interactivity can be found in TV viewing and Internet use.

The qualitative interview research was undertaken to obtain a deeper insight into specific forms of media consumption, viewed in the light of the families' moral economy (Silverstone & Hirsch, 1992). Six families were selected on the basis of responses to the project's questionnaires. This sub-survey was made as an extension of qualitative media sociology (Lull, 1990/1980) and media ethnographic studies of familial TV use (Morley, 1986). We thereby had the possibility of benefiting from relatively well-established methods, and also of contributing to further development of this area of research with respect to old and new media consumption.

The different moral economies of the families, combined with their media consumption, may be summarised as follows: There were individualistic-oriented and then social usages. The individualistic families generally functioned in the same way as David Morely's (1986) patriarchal families. We use the term 'masculine' to characterise the families in which the men were in charge of the remote control and did not like to talk during programmes, and also considered factual programmes and realistic fiction as their favourites. The women fitted in with the TV's flow and structured their house-work according to an internal timetable (K. B. Jensen et al., 1993) which followed the scheduling of their favourite fiction and drama programmes. The men had specific objectives when they used the Internet. They routinely sought information within well-defined areas of interest, whether related to work or pleasure: motor racing, stamps, and football were typical examples. Women in the masculine families did not take any interest in the Internet.

The socially oriented families liked genres such as quizzes and reality TV with which the families could actively get together when viewing and talking about the TV. We use the term 'feminine' to characterise these families. Both men and women in the feminine families used the Internet to search for information, but especially for specifically limited tasks – travel or grant applications were typical topics. The adults and children used e-mail to communicate with their friends, but the children also visited various chat rooms and in general exploited the entertainment opportunities and possibilities of the Internet to a far greater extent. Adults were uncertain about the possibilities of the Internet, whilst the children showed mastery and enthusiasm. They were constructed as experts by their parents.

With respect to adults' use of computers, the most important purpose was to accumulate knowledge and skills at work, a factor which overcame any potential gender differences, although it should be noted that skilled women were more liable to express uncertainty than skilled men. The masculine families had strongly gendered TV programme preferences (fact or fiction). The men often left the TV for the Internet in order to pursue their factual and practical interests, while the women stayed tuned to the TV flow. The feminine families used TV in a more social way and they actively participated in quizzes and reality programmes because they liked the social aspects of playing, and also of discussing the participants. Table 2 summarises how the categorised families differed in their television consumption.

Table 2.

TV use	TV use
Feminine families	Masculine families
Social	Individual
Hybrid genre (quiz & reality)	Specific genre (fact or fiction)
Hedonistic 3)	Pragmatic

The contrast between the social and individual aspects of the families' TV use is the focus here in order to emphasise that social reasons are still important for television consumption and the development of interactive TV formats. This in no way changes the overall picture of familial media use that was characterised by individualisation. For the families, TV was thus no longer the dominant shared medium. It was only in specific genres (if at all) that the whole family got together. (See Rasmussen, 2001b for a more comprehensive report of the interview study).

Interactions with and at TV and PC: The video study

The interaction analysis of video data was done in order to achieve a better understanding of the situated activity of TV reception or Internet usage. An older couple and a young man with his friends agreed to be video observed while watching "Robinson Ekspeditionen 2000" (the Danish version of "Survivor", or, rather, of the original Swedish "Expedition Robinson" – see Hujanen, 2000) and while browsing the Robinson-related sites on the Internet. Both of the households were observed when the last episode of Robinson 2000 was broadcast, thus providing us with interesting data for comparison. As mentioned earlier, it became clear that TV viewing was not just passive, nor was Internet usage – even chatting – only active. Both media allow for active interaction (understood as observable action) and passive viewing. In the data analysis the starting point was that the participants had to make their action and talk intelligible to the other(s). They were constituting the situation as a TV viewing/PC using one. It is thus in this mundane work that both the cultural values of the participants and the interactivity of the artifact emerged as empirically researchable actions.

The intelligibility or sense-making of a situation is achieved through talk, gestures, and other actions that reflectively show the speaker-doer's understanding of what has been going on so far. Also, the trajectory for ensuing action and talk is based on the interpretation at hand. Conversation analytic and ethnomethodological findings such as turn-taking, adjacency pair, recipient design and the membership categorisation device, offer analytical tools to reliably analyse the participants' action from the participants' perspective. What was it that the participants were achieving through moment-to-moment interaction? A detailed enough approach was also needed to avoid making overly hasty conclusions.

This became clear when an identical audience response was observed in the two widely different audiences (an old couple and a group of youngsters). There was a similar reaction word-for-word in each group to what happened on the screen. In both cases the audience members were amusedly repeating what was said by the programme host when he called one of the guests "old Ole" (which is also the brand name for a well-known Danish

cheese). “However, a closer look showed that the older co-viewer showed recognition/remembering and therefore agreed with the formulation, whereas the younger one commented on it. These two public interpretations could also be seen orienting to the ambiguity of the direct gaze of the TV host in a situation where he was talking to some guests that were connected via a video link to the studio: He could be seen as ‘looking at the people at home’ and/or ‘talking to his guest’. The former interpretation means that he is engaging the viewer in a virtual face-to-face interaction (and the older viewer picks up this aspect and agrees with his formulation, becoming a ‘conversationalist’); the latter interpretation makes him and his guests observable (and the young man orients to this possibility, becoming a ‘commentator’ of a public event). This was a concrete example of “how meanings and identities are formed in the interactive and interpretive practices around combinations of digital communication media and traditional media types and cultural genres” (Fornäs, 1998: 36).”

The flow of the particular TV programme would thus be a source for action (cf. parasocial interaction) that sometimes continued as a separate track from the programme, resulting in viewers switching their gaze from the TV to each other. Though the Internet allows even more possibilities for a ‘time out’ from the program (even when chatting you can check past interaction from the screen), the gaze of the participants is fixed on the screen even during the discussions between them. This could be a consequence of the physical configuration of the participants around the screen and the attentiveness to the screen as a possible site of an about-to-happen participation.

The data analysis also showed how the contestants were constructed as familiar in the talk of the viewers/users. It was interesting that the programme host was not a central character in the participants’ talk – his presence was thus also unnecessary on the programme’s web page, where he was replaced by the text, images, and videos that concern the Robinson participants.

Conclusion

The applied methodology proved useful as we obtained new, sometimes unpredicted, knowledge about the families’ use of TV and computers. The interviews gave an understanding of the family life patterns that future interactive services would be introduced into. The video study contributed to further developing the real affordances of systems that better match the present perceived affordances. We conclude with reflections about the present quest of interactivity in media research and technologies.

The interviews were conducted on the presumption that TV is a more ‘extensive’ and collective medium than computers/Internet, which are more ‘intensive’ and individual. We managed to bring aspects of the classical family studies up to date with the new media surroundings. The collective, so-

cial TV-viewing in the family was not the same as Morley and Lull argued in their media ethnographies from the 1980s. Families today have many TV-sets in the home and to a large degree are accustomed to using them individually, whereas the computers and the Internet may in fact be used collectively for entertainment and play.

Both the structural and relational aspects of social television use are changing. The exercise of power by means of the remote control (choice of programmes), regulations and censorship and the common ground of reference for family interaction and socialisation are less important than in the 1980s. The co-present and situated reception context with its possibilities for "interaction cum interpretation" is supplemented by the viewers' access to virtual settings where it is possible to expand the experience of the television programme by chatting to participants or debating with other distant viewers.

The video study shed light on the actual practices of being on-line: It was clear that user/viewers' sense-making practices use both active participation and passive monitoring, every bit comparable with watching a broadcast transmission. But the exact nature of active participation and passive monitoring differs according to the medium in question. In this regard, the observation from the video study that people tend to gaze at the PC screen even if they are talking to each other is interesting: The material design of the computer gadget and the demand for physical activity does not in fact support focused face-to-face interaction, but, rather 'ear-to-ear' commenting, while the television design allows for face-to-face interaction and 'screen-to-ear' listening.

In sum, our empirical studies have been able to shed light on how TV and computer media are used in Danish homes. We emphasise the need for more ethnographic and empirical research to make sure that the viewer/user/consumer's everyday practices are not forgotten in the new developments within broadcasting and convergent media. There is no doubt that TV and computers are important 'texts' in households today. There is not, however, enough understanding of (in the terminology of Mediated Discourse Analysis) how these *mediational means* are used in the actions that embody TV-viewing or computer using in the *community of practice* of, for instance, watching Robinson with friends or in a *nexus of practice* when chatting about it afterwards.

What is common to various types of engagement with media and technology at present is that these forms of participation are *optional*. Unlike in face-to-face discussion, there are no consequences when we do not answer the TV host who is looking at us intensively, selecting us as the next speaker. Should this freedom from active participation be cherished when defining the remit? With digital media, the consumer might have to talk back; otherwise there would be (undesirable) consequences. If the initiative comes from the programme and not its viewer, it could be hard to resist or challenge.

Therefore the hype about interactivity and convergence as direct involvement should be critically reflected upon. Better game players, abler citizens,

or increased democracy for that matter do not automatically follow from (forced) engagement with the media. However, this seems to be a direction that today's (male?) game media culture is heading. What we should fight for, therefore, are possibilities for the viewers to make initiatives ('first turns') through, for instance, discussions in chat rooms or other public spaces in which *they can choose* what the topic is. In this way the demands of the increasingly individualised, even if socially oriented, new media users would be met, and the agency of the citizens would be given more possibilities (i.e. "real affordances" would be increased) through public service and other media structures. We acknowledge that interactivity is never purely about sequential interpretation, but it is always a social process that has implications for citizenship, equality and even democracy.

Notes

1. Our data comes from a project launched in Autumn 2000 at Aalborg University, Department of Communication and VR MediaLab called Interactive TV and Cross-Media Consumption. See the project's homepage: <<http://www.vrmedialab.dk/projects/mmih>>.
2. The conversation analytic idea of sequential interpretation has been adopted by various other fields of research, for example, discursive psychology within the field of social psychology.
3. The Danish research project *Når danskerne ser tv* (When Danes watch TV) identifies three types of TV viewers: hedonists, pragmatists and moralists. A hedonist has a very positive attitude towards TV which is seen as a source of pleasure and play. TV viewing is not planned or regulated. Opposed to the hedonist is the moralist who sees TV as a dangerous 'temptation', as a waste of time. This is why TV viewing as to be planned very carefully. In between there is the pragmatic attitude: TV is considered as a mainly positive source for information and pleasure, and TV viewing is structured in accordance with other activities in the family (Jensen *et al.*, 1993: 74-75).

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About the Authors

ARI ALM (M.P.A. 1992 University of Helsinki) is Channel Head for the capital city region in the Finnish public service broadcasting company (YLE) and a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Public Management in the University of Helsinki (Finland). Alm investigates organisational and managerial transformation in public service broadcasting. His work can be reviewed, for example, in the *European Journal of Communication*, the *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* and the *YLE Broadcasting Research Review*. Alm worked as “internal change consultant” at YLE in the 1990’s.

MINNA ASLAMA (M.Sc.Ec. 1995 Helsinki School of Economics) is a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Communications at the University of Helsinki. She examines Finnish television content utilizing quantitative and qualitative case studies and the working title of her dissertation is “Tabloid Spheres: Changes in Finnish television 1993-2002”. Prior to doctoral studies Aslama was an Implementation Expert in the Finnish public service broadcasting company (YLE) and has participated in the research project “The Economic Crisis of Finland in the 1990s” sponsored by the Academy of Finland. She also conducted studies on Finnish television supply for the Ministry of Transport and Communications. Aslama is currently a Young Scholar in the “Changing Media, Changing Europe” program of the European Science Foundation.

ROBERT K. AVERY (Ph.D. 1971 Pennsylvania State University) is Professor of Communication at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City (USA). His research interests include telecommunications policy, communication history and the analysis of interactive media. Avery is founding editor of *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* and author or co-author/co-editor of numerous scholarly articles and publications, including *A History of Public Broadcasting*, *Public Service Broadcasting in a Multichannel Environment*, and *The Politics of Interconnection: A History of Public Television at the National Level*. A former public broadcasting administrator, Avery served as chair of the National Association of Educational Broadcasters and as a board

member of the Broadcast Education Association (BEA), National Communication Association (NCA), and International Communication Association (ICA).

JO BARDOEL (Ph.D. 1997 University of Amsterdam) is a senior lecturer in the Department of Communication and a researcher with The Amsterdam School of Communications Research (ASCoR), both at the University of Amsterdam. He also holds a special chair in Media Policy at the University of Nijmegen. Bardoel worked for NOS, the central organisation in Dutch public broadcasting, as a strategic planner and policy advisor for about 15 years. In 1993 he came to work at the University of Amsterdam and defended his doctoral dissertation in 1997, *Journalism in the information Society*. Bardoel teaches and conducts research in national and European communications policy, especially in relation to (public) broadcasting, as well as journalism and new media. In recent years he has consulted for Dutch ministries and media institutions.

GEORGINA BORN (Ph.D. 1989 University College London) is University Lecturer and Fellow of Emmanuel College at Cambridge where she lectures in the sociology of media and culture at the University of Cambridge. In 1997-98 she was Senior Research Fellow at King's College, Cambridge and from 1996-98 she was Visiting Professor in the Institute of Musicology, Aarhus University, Denmark. She is the author of *Rationalizing Culture: IRCAM, Boulez and the Institutionalization of the Musical Avant-Garde* (University of California Press 1995), and edited *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation and Appropriation in Music* (California 2000). She has written extensively on cultural production, the politics of culture and policy matters in relation to broadcasting, computer software, and music. Articles have appeared in journals including *Screen*, *New Formations*, *Social Anthropology*, *Cultural Anthropology*, *American Anthropologist*, *Cultural Values and Media*, *Culture and Society*. Her current work focuses on the transformation of public service broadcasting in the digital era. A forthcoming book, *Uncertain Visions*, is based on ethnographic study of the BBC that analyses changes during the Birt years.

KEES BRANTS (Ph.D. 1991 University of Amsterdam) is Director of the MA-programme in European Communication Studies and a Fellow at the Amsterdam School of Communications Research (ASCoR), both at the University of Amsterdam. Brants is also professor of political communication at the University of Leiden. An active member of the Euro-Media Research Group, he has published extensively about media policy. Other research activities include political communication, infotainment and e-democracy.

NICO CARPENTIER is a media sociologist working at the Communication Studies Department of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Free University of Brussels). He is member of the research centres SMIT and CEMESO. His research interests are mainly focused on the application of discourse theory in (media)

domains as sexuality, conflict, journalism, (political and cultural) participation and democracy. He combines teaching and research for the Cultural Policy Research Centre 'Steunpunt Re-Creatief Vlaanderen'. His publications include the articles *Images of prostitutes. The struggle for the subject position* (1999, in Dutch), *Management of voices. Power and participation in North Belgian audience discussion programmes* (2000); *The identity of the television audience* (2000, in Dutch), *Managing audience participation* (2001), *Médias et citoyens sur la même longueur d'onde. Initiatives journalistiques favorisant la participation citoyenne* (2002) and *Community media: muting the democratic discourse* (2003).

MATTHEW HIBBERD (Ph.D. 1999 University of Stirling) is Lecturer and Director, MSc in Public Relations (Online Learning) in the Department of Film and Media Studies at the University of Stirling in Scotland. Hibberd is co-author of the British Broadcasting Standards Commission-funded report, *Consenting Adults?* (2000), that examined public participation in British factual programming (Reality TV). Current projects include a book on political access programming, *Mediated Access* (University of Luton Press 2003), and a report for the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) and the Hamburg Institute of International Economics about competition, cultural variety and global governance: the case of the UK audiovisual system. Hibberd has also authored articles on the development of public service broadcasting in Italy.

HAL HIMMELSTEIN (Ph.D. 1978 Ohio University) is Professor and Chair of the Department of Television and Radio at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York (USA). He has published in the areas of television myth and ideology, political communication, intercultural broadcasting, television advertising, and video art. His books include *On the Small Screen* (1981) and *Television Myth and the American Mind* (1984, 1994). His articles on television and culture, and interviews with video artists, have appeared in *access*, *Almanac*, *The Encyclopedia of Television*, *The Journal of Film and Video*, *Journalism Studies*, *Wide Angle*, and various anthologies. He was a Fulbright Research Scholar at the University of Helsinki (Autumn 1990), and Visiting Professor at the Radio and Television Institute (RTI) of the Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE, Spring 1991).

CHRISTINA HOLTZ-BACHA (Ph.D. 1978 University of Münster) is Professor in the Department of Communication (Institut für Publizistik) at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Germany. Her main field of research and teaching is political communication and media systems, also in a comparative perspective. In addition to several books on political communication, she has published widely in German and international journals. Holtz-Bacha is a co-editor of the German journal *Publizistik* and the current Chair of the Political Communication Division in the International Communication Association (ICA).

TAISTO HUJANEN (Ph.D. 1986 University of Tampere) is Professor of Electronic Media and Communication in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Tampere. His research interests include public service broadcasting, digitalisation of broadcasting and the generic history of broadcast journalism. He served as Guest Editor for a symposium in the *Journal of Radio Studies* (together with Per Jauert) on Scandinavian Radio (1998). Recently Hujanen authored a book about programme management in public service television titled *The Power of Schedule: Programme Management in the Transformation of Finnish Public Service Television* (University of Tampere Press 2002). He has also served as co-ordinator of the Nordic network for post-graduate studies in public service and electronic media (1997-99).

JOHN D. JACKSON (Ph.D. 1967 Michigan State University) is Professor Emeritus (sociology) at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. He is presently affiliated with Concordia University's Centre for Broadcasting Studies as a Research Associate. His research interests are devoted to broadcasting, focussing on policy, radio and nationalism. Earlier work was in the areas of community development and the sociology of language. Examples of his work may be reviewed in the *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, *the Journal of Radio Studies*, *Fréquence/Frequency*, and *L'Annuaire Théâtrale*. Jackson is a past president of the Canadian Sociology & Anthropology Association.

KAROL JAKUBOWICZ (Ph.D. 1989 University of Warsaw), is an adviser to the Chairman of the National Broadcasting Council of Poland, the broadcasting regulatory authority, and an international consultant on broadcasting legislation. As a Council of Europe expert in this field, he has been involved in many missions and projects concerning the development of media legislation in post-Communist countries. He has worked as a journalist and in executive positions including Head of Strategic Planning and Development at Polish Television. He has been active in the Council of Europe as former Chairman of the Committee of Experts on Media Concentrations and Pluralism, and until recently was Chairman of the Standing Committee on Transfrontier Television. Jakubowicz currently serves as Vice Chairman of the Steering Committee on the Mass Media. He has been a member of the Digital Strategy Group of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). He is a member of Team 2 "Media Policy Between Culture and Commerce" of the "Changing Media – Changing Europe" research programme of the European Science Foundation.

PER JAUERT (MA, Cand phil 1975 University of Aarhus) is Associate Professor in Media Studies at the Department of Information and Media Studies at the University of Aarhus, Denmark. Jauert's main research areas are radio history, community media and media sociology. At present he is part of the MODINET resarch project (Media and Democracy in the Network Society:

2002-2005; www.hum.ku.dk/modinet/). His work in English can be reviewed, for example, in the *Journal of Radio Studies*, *Javnost-The Public*, and the *Nordicom Review*.

RICO LIE (Ph.D. 2000 Catholic University of Brussels) is a social anthropologist in the Department of Communication and Innovation Studies (CIS), based at the Wageningen University (WU) in The Netherlands. He previously worked at the University of Brussels in Belgium and the Universities of Nijmegen and Leiden in The Netherlands. At CIS, Lie is a university lecturer in international communication and interested in the areas of development communication and intercultural communication. His most recent publication is *Spaces of Intercultural Communication: An Interdisciplinary Introduction to Communication, Culture and Globalizing/Localizing Identities* (Hampton Press 2003).

GREGORY FERRELL LOWE (Ph.D. 1992 University of Texas at Austin) is the Managing Chair for YLE Programme Development (Edge) in the Finnish public service broadcasting company and a Docent in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication in the University of Tampere (Finland). Lowe investigates transformation processes with a focus on media and management development in European public service broadcasting. Before immigration to Finland in 1997, Lowe was Visiting Professor in the School of Journalism and Telecommunications at the University of Kentucky (1992-1994) and an Assistant Professor in the Department of Radio and Television at the George Washington University in D.C. (1994-1997). His work can be reviewed, for example, in the *Journal of Communication*, the *European Journal of Communication*, the *Journal of Radio Studies*, and the *Nordicom Review*. Lowe represents YLE in scholarly conferences (e.g., BEA and IAMCR) and at events associated with the European Broadcasting Union (EBU).

JAIRO LUGO (MPhil 2002 University of Sussex) is a lecturer in the School of Media, Critical & Creative Arts of Liverpool John Moores University (UK). Lugo has been working on the political economy of ICTs and its impact on democratic practices and media consumption. His work focuses on the media in the developing world. He has published in English and Spanish under titles such as *Información de Estado* (Zulia University Press), *Glosario para Periodistas* (Zulia State Press) and in academic journals including *ArgentinaGlobal* (Buenos Aires) and *Games Studies* (Oslo). Lugo previously worked as journalist and editor for newspapers and radio in the USA and Latin America.

BRIAN MCNAIR (Ph.D. 1987 University of Glasgow) is Reader in Film & Media Studies at the University of Stirling in Scotland. He is the author of many books and articles on the media, including *News and Journalism in the UK* (4th edition 2003), *The Sociology of Journalism* (1998) and *Journalism and Democracy* (2000). McNair's current research interests include global news culture in the 21st Century, political journalism, and sexuality and the media.

PERTTI NÄRÄNEN (M.S.Sc. 1991 University of Tampere) is a full-time doctoral researcher in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Tampere (Finland). His research interests include digital television, online journalism and new media. Previously Näränen has worked as a co-ordinator in the University Network for Communication Sciences, a lecturer for the degree programme in audiovisual culture at U. of Tampere and as managing editor of *Tiedotustutkimus*, a leading Finnish journal for media research.

MARC RABOY (Ph.D. 1986 McGill University) is Full Professor in the Department of Communication, University of Montreal, and head of the inter-university Joint Ph.D. Program in Communication at the Universities of Montreal, Concordia and Quebec (Canada). He has published widely in the area of media policy, with an increasing emphasis on international and global issues. He is head of the Global Media Policy working group and a member of the International Council of IAMCR (the International Association of Media and Communication Research). His most recent edited books are *Global Media Policy for the New Millennium* (University of Luton Press 2002) and (with Monroe E. Price) *Public Broadcasting in Transition: A Documentary Reader* (European Institute for the Media 2001).

TOVE ARENDT RASMUSSEN (Ph.D. 1990 Aalborg University) is Associate Professor in the Department of Communication at Aalborg University (Denmark). Rasmussen investigates use and reception of television and interactive media and takes part in a project about "Multimedia in the home" which is concentrating on the user perspective in the development of interactive, digital television. She is also researching the formation of reality television in Denmark, focussing especially on the hybridization of genre and media.

PIRKKO RAUDASKOSKI (Ph.D. 1999 University of Oulu) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication at Aalborg University (Denmark) and a Docent (in the field of educational technology, especially communication and interaction research) in the Faculty of Education in Oulu University (Finland). Raudaskoski has a general interest in meaning making processes as social, public phenomena and in how the material environment influences the way people understand what is happening in specific situations. She takes an interdisciplinary approach to this topic, and is therefore affiliated with several research environments. Raudaskoski is an active member of the interdisciplinary Center for Discourse Studies (<http://diskurs.humfak.auc.dk>) founded in 2002 in the Faculty of Humanities at Aalborg University.

TONY SAMPSON (2002 University of Essex) is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Essex and a Senior Lecturer in Multimedia and Digital Culture at the University of East London (UK). Sampson's work explores the field of New Media Technology from philosophical, sociological and practical perspectives. He has presented and published papers on the influence of new media theory and practice on journalism studies in UK universities, the com-

puter games industry in Latin America and the strategic role of television in warfare. His most recent work investigates the computer virus phenomenon in relation to media theory.

JAN SERVAES (Ph.D. 1987 Catholic University of Leuven) is Professor and Chair of the School of Journalism and Communication at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia, and President of the European Consortium For Communications Research (ECCR). He has taught International Communication and Development Communication in Belgium (Brussels and Antwerp), the USA (Cornell), The Netherlands (Nijmegen), and Thailand (Thammasat, Bangkok). He is also Vice-President of the International Association of Media and Communication Research (IAMCR), in charge of Academic Publications and Research. He has undertaken research, development, and advisory work around the world and is known as the author of journal articles and books on such topics as international and development communication; ICT & media policies; social change; and human rights and conflict management.

ALAN G. STAVITSKY (Ph.D. 1990 The Ohio State University) is Associate Dean and Associate Professor in the School of Journalism and Communication at the University of Oregon (USA). Stavitsky's research interests include media policy and history, public broadcasting and the radio industry. He has authored and co-authored books on public radio journalism and public broadcasting history, and is currently completing a book about contemporary U.S. radio for Temple University Press.

JEANETTE STEEMERS (Ph.D. 1990 University of Bath) is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Media and Cultural Production at De Montfort University in Leicester (England). Her research interests include European media policy and the circulation of British television exports. Her work can be reviewed, for example, in *Convergence: The Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, the *The Canadian Journal of Communication* and *Media Perspektiven*. She is editor of *Changing Channels: The Prospects for Television in a Digital World* (University of Luton Press 1998). She is currently working on 'European Television Industries' and 'Selling Television: British Television in the Global Marketplace' two books for the British Film Institute.

VIVI THEODOROPOULOU (1999 London School of Economics and Political Science) is a Doctoral Candidate in Sociology (Media@lse programme) at the London School of Economics, working on the topic 'The diffusion and adoption of digital television among the first generation of the digital TV audience in the UK'. Her research interests evolve around the social dimensions of new media with a particular focus on issues of access and use. She is also concerned with technology and cultural forms' consumption as a means of identity construction, thus her interest in mediation, (changing) audiences and users in general, and fandom, sports and niche audiences, in particular.

BARBARA THOMASS (Ph.D. 1998 University of Hamburg) is Visiting Professor at the Ruhr University of Bochum (Germany). Since 2000 she had been working on her habilitation with a scholarship from the German Research Association ("Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft"). Her main research interests and publications have been media politics in Western Europe, media and journalistic ethics, media systems in Eastern Europe, regional television in Europe, and the future of public service broadcasting.

MARKO TURPEINEN (Ph.D. 2000 Helsinki University of Technology) is a Senior Research Scientist at Helsinki Institute of Information Technology (HIIT) and Vice-President of Research and Technology at Alma Media Interactive. Dr. Turpeinen holds a S.M. in Media Arts and Sciences (2000, Massachusetts Institute of Technology). His research interests are media content customization, collaborative storytelling in digital media, and computer-mediated communities. His work at Alma Media has dealt extensively with issues related to multi-channel publishing, media customization, dynamic customer profiling, privacy, and intellectual property rights.

ELENA VARTANOVA (Ph.D. 1999 Moscow State University) is Full Professor in the Faculty of Journalism at Moscow State University, as well as Vice Dean (in charge of scientific research) and the Director of the Centre for Finnish Russian Studies in Journalism, Mass Communication and Culture. Her research interests include studies of media systems in Nordic countries, the Information Society, post-Soviet transformation of Russian media, and media economics. Vartanova is an author of two monographs (in Russian) on Nordic and Finnish media systems, co-editor of the *Russian Media Challenge* (ed. by K. Nordenstreng, E. Vartanova, Y. Zassoursky, Helsinki, 2001) and also the author of the chapter "Media Structures: Changed and Unchanged" in that book. Her work has been published in journals including the *European Journal of Communication* and *Gazette*.

MARY VIPOND (Ph.D. 1974 University of Toronto) is a Full Professor of History at Concordia University in Montreal, where she is also a Fellow of the Centre for Broadcasting Studies. Her research focuses on the history of Canadian radio. In addition to articles in the *Journal of Radio Studies* and the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television*, she has published *Listening In: The First Decade of Canadian Broadcasting, 1922-1932* (1992) and *The Mass Media in Canada* (3rd ed. 2000). She is currently completing a book on the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission (1932-1936) and commencing a project on censorship and propaganda at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation during World War II.

YASSEN N. ZASSOURSKY is professor and Dean of the Faculty of Journalism in Moscow State University. He holds a Ph.D. (1951) and a Dsc (1965) in American Literature, and has lectured on mass media and literature at universities in Australia, Ecuador, Egypt, Finland, France, the USA and other countries. Zassoursky worked in close co-operation with the McBride Inter-

national Commission on Communication as a consultant and adviser. His research activities concentrate on comparative studies of national, regional and global media systems, images of Russia in American and other Western media, and models and new theories of the Russian media.

Will broadcasting survive convergence, and should it survive? If yes, why and in what form? The questions were fundamental to the RIPE@2002 conference in Finland and lay the groundwork for this book, representing the culmination of nearly two years of fruitful collaboration between media scholars and practitioners with a keen focus on the future of public service media. The contents help set the stage for the RIPE@2004 conference being organised in Denmark.

The essential idea behind Re-visionary Interpretations of the Public Enterprise [RIPE] is a recognition that conceptual justification for public service broadcasting no longer resonates. The authors in this volume explore various dimensions about what is different to any compelling degree about the public service approach that convincingly justifies its remit today, and about what contemporary ingredients could fruitfully reframe its conceptual and operational designs.

This book is relevant to discourse and policy about a quality of public life interdependent with social processes that continue to respect and also defend values that nourish media pluralism, cultural diversity, political democracy and social tolerance. The book begins with the large-scale society and policy framework, moving next to the institutional framework and organizational practices, and concludes with consideration of reception and application. The authors also represent the Trans-Atlantic nature of the RIPE initiative.

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Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research

Göteborg University

Box 713, SE 405 30 Göteborg, Sweden

Telephone +46 31 773 10 00

Fax +46 31 773 46 55

E-mail: nordicom@nordicom.gu.se

www.nordicom.gu.se

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