

Cultural Dilemmas in Public Service Broadcasting

Gregory Ferrell Lowe
& Per Jauert (eds.)

RIPE@2005

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NORDICOM

Göteborg University, Box 713, SE 405 30 Göteborg
Phone: +46 31/773 10 00 (vx) Fax: +46 31/773 46 55
E-mail: nordicom@nordicom.gu.se

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Preface

This book is a maturing of work in the RIPE@2004 conference about cultural mission tensions and cultural service dilemmas in public service broadcasting [PSB]. The conference was organised jointly by the Danish Broadcasting Company [DR] and the Department of Information and Media Studies, University of Aarhus. The 2004 conference materials may be reviewed at: www.yle.fi/keto/ripe.

Re-Visionary-Interpretations of the Public Enterprise [RIPE] is an initiative established in 2001 to strengthen collaborative relations between media scholars and PSB practitioners. The focus of this initiative is the contemporary relevance of the remit for public service broadcasting, and public service media more generally.

The organisers and participants for the 2004 conference express appreciation to DR and the Director General's Office, to the Danish Research Council, the Aarhus University Research Foundation and to YLE's Office for Corporate Development (YLE Kehitystoiminta) for sponsorship and support.

The conference greatly benefited from the work of the Conference Planning Group and their sponsoring institutions: Jo Bardoel (University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands), Søs Holmdal (Danish Broadcasting Company), Taisto Hujanen (University of Tampere, Finland) and Henrik Søndergaard, (University of Copenhagen, Denmark). We also received helpful comments and inputs from the panel of RIPE Advisory Associates: Christina Holz-Bacha (then at the University of Mainz, Germany), John Jackson (Concordia University, Canada), Horace Newcomb (The University of Georgia, USA) and Kenton Wilkinson (University of Texas at San Antonio, 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 2004 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 that the RIPE@2006 conference will take place in Amsterdam and is co-sponsored by Netherlands Public Broadcasting and the Amsterdam School for Communications Research (ASCoR) at the University of Amsterdam. The theme in 2006 will focus on programming and genres, on the legitimacy and necessity of public service programmes and production.

Aarhus and Helsinki in November, 2005

Per Jauert

Gregory Ferrell Lowe

Prologue

Quality, Accountability and Assessment

Arne Wessberg

Today every society is struggling with a challenging duality of sub-culture and globalization; in practice this means dealing with fragmentation and segmentation on the one hand, and with homogenisation and synchronism on the other. PSB is fundamentally domestic in orientation and operation. It's about serving the national life of a people in all their astonishing variety and complexity. What, then, adds up to a 'national culture,' and how do we nurture that while rigorously assuring that doing so isn't the least bit about nationalism with its oppressive, repressive and regressive traits?

Moreover, audiences are attending to international channels and imported programming. Those products are often of different quality standards when compared with domestic products, in part keyed to market size and investment scale and in part to broad but differing cultural values inscribing the social context where programmes are produced. Domestic programming quite often can't achieve parity in the look and feel because there is less resources to work with, or because doing so isn't accepted as credible by audiences when domestically produced, even if popular when coming from abroad.

Similarly, the public service ethic promises to provide 'quality' radio and television programmes – indeed, to guarantee that as a characteristic ingredient. Our services are intended to provide a benchmark for the quality of broadcasting overall, including especially the standards commercial competitors must achieve to be considered professional by national audiences. But it is extremely difficult to quantify what quality actually amounts to. Much of this is subjectively construed and rooted in cultural perceptions, themselves often at odds across various groups. What one person sees as a fair and balanced news report, evidencing the highest standards of journalistic practice, another considers biased and manipulative – failing such standards. Moreover, the quality of the product may be quite a different matter compared to the quality of its environmental impact. A racist programme can be well made, after all, but that doesn't mean it is a good thing to make. Thus, accountability and assessment are crucial concerns, specifically with regard to social and cultural implications.

Although accountability and assessment are interdependent, treating each respectively is instructive. Accountability is a social ethic and a socio-political requirement for public service broadcasting [PSB]. Assessment is about the tools and procedures we must now create to measure the degrees to which those public promises that secure the PSB remit are fulfilled in practice. Accountability is comparatively abstract, sometimes very much so. For example, the PSB ethic promises to nurture domestic culture. Distilling that sensible notion into measurable, valid and comprehensive instrumentation is a slippery and frequently divisive chore.

Accountability is about responsibility. In fact, PSB has always been accountable by many and various means. Government authorities have frequently held PSB companies to rigorous account in any number of areas. Funding has been repeatedly cut, senior managers have been replaced, new competitors have been licensed, and competition has been consolidated. Journalistic guidelines and news policies are routinely reviewed and renewed. Investment in developing new media services is deliberated and usually supported only with conditions attached. Finances are continually scrutinised, and funding is pegged to, and limited by, political decisions about wider social policy objectives. Audience choice implies continual public scrutiny and judgement in every hour of every day on every channel we programme. PSB is accountable today, and it always has been. PSB is factually more accountable in more ways than any commercial counterpart.

Regarding assessment, we are challenged with figuring out what we precisely mean by the terms of the contract. That requires balancing ethical objectives with contextual realities. PSB is typically mandated to support educational attainment, for example. Considering only two options, is supporting that mainly about providing school programmes as a resource for teachers or mostly about encouraging life-long learning for adults? Arguably it is about both, so then in what proportions and measured by which criteria? How do we define and how could we operationalise?

There are tried and true measures for some things, mainly the tools long used by commercial companies – and, actually, developed for them to serve their needs. These would include measurement of reach, share and ratings. There are also familiar tools for the routine measurement of audience satisfaction. But much that PSB is being asked to define and measure either hasn't been measured before, or has been measured for other purposes in different contexts. Invention and adaptation are necessary, but both take time and money to develop. Development is obligatory to guarantee that results are valid and reliable. Social measures are notoriously difficult to elaborate and apply. How do we measure the value of tolerance in society? Or how about media's direct and proportionate contribution to civic engagement in democratic processes?

So far I've been talking about translating the language of principle into the language of measurement. But the complications run deeper. Experience in the EBU provides ample evidence of the difficulties in translating even

the most fundamental term, “public service”, in a way that could guarantee the term means essentially the same thing semantically in each of the many language families represented by members. Whereas ‘public service’ is associated with highways and hospitals in one language – i.e., mainly with infrastructure – it is associated with class and welfare in another – i.e., mainly with redistribution of wealth.

The fundamental issue in assessment hinges on the question of how to justify the income a PSB company receives in fees or tax proceeds, and further how to ensure that income is allocated properly. Again, commercial media companies have proven tools for assessing the more limited but significant areas in which they are accountable. There are sophisticated tools for counting people and money, and also for connecting the two for business-related needs. Their right to exist is mainly determined by assessing capital profits accumulated over routine periods of time. Non-profit operators, mainly PSB but also some community media, don’t accumulate economic capital but are expected to build social capital. That is much harder to measure, and the tools are quite new and many untested.

Ways to assess PSB performance are needed, and also desired. This is to be embraced rather than resisted. Any fair and balanced assessment will show areas for improvement and areas where we have already improved. Of course the results will sometimes hurt and remedies can be painful. But development is never painless and innovation thrives on positive turbulence. The challenge is to ensure that everything important and each interdependent variable is assessed, not only those dimensions that are important to some for self-interested reasons.

For example, some care much less about the quality of multicultural pluralism than about the health and vitality of an informed electorate. It should be obvious that the two are interdependent, however. Similarly, achieving quality, however defined, certainly depends at least in part on adequate expenditure. As the old saying goes, “you get what you pay for.” The best talent in any area of professional production is only rarely the cheapest option, and quality standards have been conditioned by previous experience that determines expectations. PSB companies are mandated to spend the money they receive to fund their services. Spending public money is not the issue. The issue is to guarantee that none of the money is *wasted*. In this sense, PSB is no different from commercial broadcasting – spending is about investing. The main difference lies in how we define and calculate the ‘profit’.

Speaking on behalf of PSB practitioners in the European Broadcasting Union, we appreciate the efforts of so many scholars and researchers working (collaboratively when possible and independently when necessary) to address the deep theoretical issues, in its self an invaluable contribution, and further to help create and develop credible measurement systems for PSB. At heart, we are jointly engaged with the intellectual and practical work necessary to develop an increasingly appropriate PSB in line with social demands, cultural identities, political policies and economic activities in the

early 21st century. This is exciting work. The results matter not only to PSB companies and scholarly communities, but rather more importantly in determining the type and availability of socially responsible media resources. That is demanding work. The risks are many and varied. But this is work worth doing because the on-going, evolving and cumulative result is, in itself, a service to the public – actually to the fullest variety of publics in each society, a situation rich in cultural diversity and yet joined in national life. This book is a needed contribution in helping clarify cultural dilemmas in public service broadcasting today to chart realistic options in developing that for tomorrow.

Public Service Broadcasting for Social and Cultural Citizenship

Renewing the Enlightenment Mission

Per Jauert & Gregory Ferrell Lowe

Early PSB – nation building and common culture

Although broadcasting was launched nearly everywhere by commercial manufacturers to stimulate a new market for selling radio parts when military involvement declined after the First World War (Lewis, 1993), its evolution took different paths depending on social context and cultural preferences. In the United States broadcasting began and remained commercially based and industrially-oriented, despite recurring efforts by social progressives to change that (Witherspoon et al., 2000; McCourt, 1999; Engelman, 1996; McChesney, 1990). In contrast, during its inaugural period (1920s and 1930s) Europeans were struggling with growing social unrest and ideological turmoil, distressed by concerns about the rise of fascism in the West and the spread of communism from the East. A public service approach was created in hopes of safe-guarding broadcasting against abuse, and even as a potential antidote.

Public service broadcasting [PSB] has been mandated with a cultural mission from its inception. PSB was explicitly focused on providing programming as social services. Mainly these functions were informational, educational and cultural. In some countries, Finland for example, PSB was also mandated to facilitate (and hopefully to nurture) intercultural harmony – in that case between conflicted Finnish-Finns and Swedish-Finns in their early nation building period (Endén, 1996).

Paternalism was the dominating attitude of the institution towards its audiences more or less until the era of deregulation in the 1980s. Indeed, paternalism was a vital part of the enlightenment project of PSB, although the specifics in shaping social and cultural capital are of varied character. In its inaugural period, a cultural mission for broadcasting was part of the social agenda. That mission was defined in ways that were characteristically nationalist. What interconnected the Swedes, the British or any other nationality we might assess after broadcast media arrived? Which role did they play? How was the political request for enlightenment, as one of the core ingre-

dients of PSB, administered and adapted – not only by the institutions in their programme policies but also by people, both in the sense of *citoyens* and as members of an audience?

The Swedish ethnologist, Orvar Löfgren (1990), investigated how modern cultural institutions, especially the media, administered the heritage from 18th and 19th century conceptions of the Nation and unified National Culture. In his analyses of Swedish national culture in the first decades of the 20th century, Löfgren applies Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities", not as a synonym for national identity but rather as a way to encircle common feeling or a sense of "Swedishness", defined as that which all Swedes are sharing at a given moment in history. Stating that we do not know enough of *what* is shared and *how* it is shared, Anderson defined the nation as imaginary: "It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson, 1983:15). Although in public debate about the cultural role of mass media it is often claimed they dilute national culture, in historical perspective it is clearly the other way around. Over the last century mass media in large part shaped a national sense of shared imaginations and frames of reference (Löfgren, 1990:89).

The rhetoric about national culture in the 19th century circulated within a restricted apex of society, in that rarefied public sphere dominated by the bourgeois elite, industrial capitalists and the upper echelon of civil servants. Expanding print media and, especially, live broadcast radio created a geopolitical national space, cultivating a new shared or common cultural space. For its part, PSB was obliged to handle culture in two ways. The first was mainly European and the second was primarily domestic.

The first and mainly European dimension was about "Sunday Culture", associated with dressing up in your best clothes, as in going to church, and doing one's normative duty as a 'good' citizen. This aspect was about broadly securing Cultural Heritage and dealing out normative cultural capital; it was a civilising mission about knowing what anyone is supposed to know as an enlightened citizen. European Canonic Culture, integral to all European nations but not peculiar to any single nation, was grafted into Western European public broadcasting as one of the pillars of institutional construction.

The second and primarily domestic dimension focused on national culture. This was "Everyday Culture" in work clothes down at the local pub – the unique, intimately personal national culture that is necessarily situated in the routines of everyday life. As Bordieu would put it, this is the cultural praxis of the national *habitus*; phenomena which are hard to describe precisely or to comprehensively grasp, but in general deal with widely shared social experiences. With radio and for the first time, this was given voice and communicated to everyone in society at the same time via the daily news, weather forecasts, sketches, radio dramas, and features (the chapter by Scannell is keenly relevant here). Everything that taken together comprises the tradi-

tions and daily life of national domestic cultural life became grist for the mill, shaped as material for everyday conversations in families and neighbourhoods that cumulatively construct a sense of shared national values and experiences (c.f. Moores, 1988).

The European approach was therefore patterned as a “social responsibility model” (McQuail, 1987); it was an inheritor of Enlightenment legacies and thoroughly Modern at the height of modernity. This is evident in PSB’s defining characteristics. It was created more as institution than organisation, dedicated to social progress, committed to rationality and positioned to operate with relative autonomy. This was broadcasting with an ethic; progressive, principled and paternalist. Its cultural mission was about art and taste, the first for preservation and distribution, the second for appreciation. It wasn’t intended to be popular, at least not all the time and in everything. It was also never intended to be competitive. PSB had a mission that didn’t require thinking about or competing with the doctrines of other churches, although it always required legitimacy in how it handles political and social issues *vis-à-vis* the broad spectrum of public opinions at any given moment.

Today, the historic ideals are not widely understood if even remembered, much less shared. Competition is so pronounced that it has become cliché to classify such as harsh, fierce, heavy, an onslaught. Few PSB companies have enough funding to operate in purely non-commercial practice, and PSB practitioners are focussed on strategy, profiling, branding, restructuring, downsizing, and outsourcing – i.e., all the tools and concepts associated with broadcasting as an industrial endeavour. PSB operations are similarly caught on the horns of a dilemma. If its programmes are very popular, PSB is attacked by commercial lobbies with claims of unfair competition as a subsidised infraction of EU law. But if its programmes aren’t popular enough, PSB is ridiculed as an antiquated and anachronistic system. The crux of commercial critique is well rehearsed by now: Scarce public funding is being wasted and audiences can get better stuff for “free,” never mind the hidden costs for the marketing one pays as part of every purchased product that has been advertised. Full service is characterised as bad service: in the first instance for tax-paying citizens mainly addressed as consumers, and in the second for commercial operators that could do with less successful competition from PSB.

PSB has an historic and still valid mission to nurture national cultures, something of keenest relevance in view of globalization. But it is far from certain what the national in culture really means today, or ought to mean. It is more certain what it ought *not* to mean or be construed as being: nationalist, paternalist or elitist. With some complicated blend of sensitivity, neutrality and advocacy, domestic PSB must now cope with increasingly globalized and multicultural societies. Abandoning measured efforts to support and even defend national culture, broadly construed, would fly in the face of what PSB companies are expected to do in legal requirement and popular opinion. The public typically expects their domestic PSB companies to

reflect and support shared national cultural distinctions. The dilemma lies in how to work within broader borders but with finer nuances.

This situation is the background that framed the RIPE@2004 conference – *Mission, Market and Management: Public Service Broadcasting and the Cultural Commons* (www.yle.fi/keto/ripe). Exploring this notion of a “cultural commons”, to our knowledge first articulated by Rifkin (2000) in his critique of the commercial exploitation of cultural artefacts and heritage, opened many discrete but interdependent doors. Updating the public service remit became a necessary preoccupation in the late 1990s. The first RIPE conference in 2002 focused on new articulation of the PSB remit in light of digitization and convergence (Lowe and Hujanen, 2003). The second RIPE conference in 2004 continued this articulation work by focussing specifically on renewing its cultural mission. The book you are reading is the distillation and polishing of themes, dimensions and issues keyed to that effort. In dialogue with PSB practitioners, media scholars and researchers are discussing what public service means today, and how it should be mandated. Because conditions are drastically different when compared to the past, exploring possibilities for a relevant and contemporary Enlightenment mission is one prerequisite for PSB development. In this introductory chapter, we work to situate the importance of this discussion; to envision the shared context in which such articulation finds purchase; to establish the centrality of treated topics to the legitimacy, even necessity, of public service mediation today.

Enlightenment and broadcasting – culture and the commons

The ideal of serving an Enlightenment mission has always been central to the PSB role and function, its legitimating remit, especially in European societies. Progressive thought elaborated in the 19th century, combined with economic highs in the 1920s and lows in the 1930s, were the impetus for positioning broadcast media as an institution situated between and comparatively autonomous from government control and market inequity. The mission is a defining strand in the DNA of PSB, so to say, and it is still relevant because many of the cultural issues that PSB was originally instituted to partially address are recurrent and growing problems today. It’s nearly impossible to read a daily that doesn’t contain at least one story about inter-cultural conflict, cross-cultural misunderstanding, intra-cultural identities, counter-cultural alternatives or sub-cultural discrepancies. Integration and fragmentation is one of the fundamental contradictions of our day (for treatment of a pointed case, see the chapter by Saranovitz).

Using contemporary terms, we could say that the theory and organisation of PSB was deliberately situated to build “social capital” (Putnam, 2000) in the service of cultural cohesion in the context of representative democracy.

Although the national orientation and subsequent complexion was too evangelistic in designed cultural intentions, it was appreciably about making programmes to support the national interests in strengthening capabilities for enacting one's democratic citizenship on a rational and properly informed basis, for consolidating the integrity of a shared national cultural identity. In this sense, broadcasting was thoroughly transformational in character. In part, this character was inherent in broadcasting generally as a social technology, however situated and organised (i.e., also in commercial application). Broadcasting brought public life into the private domain, and opened private life to the public domain (Scannell, 1996; Löfgren, 1990). First in radio and later in television, broadcasting played a crucial role in the domestication of social life. Its mode of address was intimate and immediate; its narrative was serially constructed; its use was the private experience of a shared public good offering programmes (in itself a developmental construct) that increasingly meshed with the daily rhythms and seasonal cycles of life experience.

For Scannell the temporality of broadcasting is the key to its understanding (Morley 2000:109). An important aspect in Scannell's work is "the sociable dimension of radio and broadcasting as its basic communicative ethos" (op.cit. 110). But Morley underscores the limitations of sociability in broadcasting because each programme conveys signals (signs, messages and content) that appeal to certain parts of the audience, inviting them to take part in social life while at the same time and inherently such signals indicate for other groups that this programme, at least, is not for them; they are not among those especially invited to its particular forum of sociability (op.cit). Characteristic of the inclusive and exclusive mechanisms of public spheres more generally, broadcasting from its very beginning grappled with a tension between the ideal of "addressing all citizens" and its everyday reality of not being able to bridge all cultural and social differences demarcating class, gender or generations in any particular programme.

In Western European broadcasting history, this tension can be traced on different levels in the politics and policies concerning PSB institutions. Radio gradually lost its position as the dominant voice for Sunday Culture as everyday topics and phenomena occupied more and more space, not least in the Nordic countries where influence from the Social Democrats was of vital importance in shaping PSB as broadcasting monopoly. On the one hand the Social Democrats wanted the working class to have access to distinguished parts of Sunday Culture, e.g., insight about democratic values and societal procedures, and basic knowledge of current issues within science and arts. On the other hand, the left did not want to impose taste and values from 'high brow' culture (classical music, operas etc.) on the public. One of the radio pioneers in Denmark, Peder Nørgaard, who later became Head of the Board of the Danish Broadcasting Company, put it this way in 1934:

The greater part of the working class people is not pleased by listening to Opera and concerts performed by Symphony Orchestras. No – after the end

of a day's work during and after the evening meal they like to listen to a lively tune from a popular Orchestra or the gramophone, followed by a presentation about current social, political, commercial and other issues (Arbejder Radio 1934 [Working Class Radio – Journal for Union of Working Class Radio]).

Broadcasting was also transformational when assessed as a tool with specific 'strategic objectives', again to use a contemporary term. Commercial broadcasting has been interdependent with the evolution of market capitalism, individualism and consumerism (Ellis, 2000). It greatly enlarged the horizon for marketing domestic appliances, enhancing personal conveniences, and securing commercial imperatives. Public service broadcasting has similarly been interdependent, but for a different strand of social development. PSB has greatly contributed to the quality of public discourse, the average standards of knowledge capability, and appreciation for the riches of cultural heritage. The means and objectives to which broadcasting is applied reflect the ideals of differing societal preferences and ambitions (the chapter by Avery is instructive). But systemic conditions have never been entirely stable and thus, as Ellis (2000) suggests, broadcasting has been a lightning rod for broader society negotiations, as well as facilitations, in each decade of its nearly 80-year history.

Obviously the historic social context in which the PSB cultural mission was initially defined is fundamentally different compared with contemporary trends, conditions and preferences. This is the era of media market consolidation and audience market segmentation. Simply getting audience attention is a stern challenge; keeping it on some relatively consistent basis is a tougher job by far. Certainly nothing in the era of broadcast monopoly could have prepared PSB for the radical context shift. Ours is the age of personalisation, customisation and individualism: choice is a right and rejection is an option. This is the dawning of customer relationship management (for insightful discussion relevant to PSB, see the chapter by Picard). The normative narrative so characteristic of historic PSB has already given way to the drama of diversity; social responsibility is now being eclipsed in the shadow of private prerogative; cultural cohesion is increasingly hampered by social fragmentation. Non-profit PSB companies are expected, even mandated, to adhere to principles and methods that characterise purely commercial firms (Lowe and Alm, 1997), but how that is handled may vary considerably even within a singular national context (the chapter by Coppens offers insightful treatment here). The co-optation of culture for market-related success and for "communitarian fundamentalism" (Touraine, 2000), are jointly reducing the richness of our symbolic world to increasingly instrumental applications.

Like the nation-state it supports, and to which it is beholden for its lease on life, PSB seems too small for the big things and too big for the small things. It is targeted for budgetary cuts that are frequently draconian, and in too many cases required to solve its deficit problems by incorporating advertising and thereby competing directly with commercial broadcasting for revenue. Much

of the sustained attack against PSB in Europe has been keyed to contradictions when comparing its philosophic ideals with its operational realities (for relevant discussion, see the chapter by McNair). The danger of PSB collapse is quite real, and largely because the context in which it is situated has changed radically since the early 1980s. It remains more national than European, not-for-profit even when partly funded by commercial revenue, and situated within competitive national markets that are increasingly trans-national (for analysis about EU policy development and PSB national regulation, see the chapter by Bardoel et al; for treatment of contemporary commercial revenue and trans-national market issues see the chapter by Steemers).

Of course there are many ways that 'culture' can be defined. The reader will find a variety of dimensions in subsequent chapters. The social science of anthropology is about defining culture in theory based on research. For our purposes here, two understandings about that term are most relevant. The first follows Touraine (2000:34):

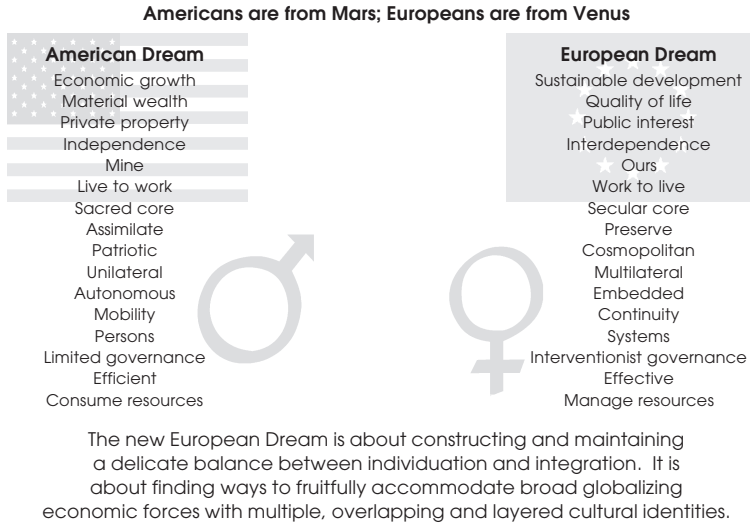
Culture is neither a world-view, an ideology nor a holy book; it is a combination of techniques for using natural resources, modes of integrating individuals into a collectivity, and references to a conception of the subject, which may be religious or humanistic. It is not a body of beliefs and practices, and it can be transformed when any one of its three major components is modified.

In this understanding, culture is quite practical. Of course it is fundamentally about what one believes to be true and right – that's evident in "references to a conception of the subject" – but it is organic in that it is always evolving and it is practical because it is about applying those beliefs. The second understanding is borrowed from Rifkin who draws a rather stark contrast when comparing American versus European cultures, broadly construed – an issue of obvious import in light of advancing globalization with its strongly Americanised roots (Figure 1).

Rifkin (2004:236) defines culture as that which "conditions the mind to view the world in a certain way and therefore leads to new discoveries that conform with a people's mental perception of the scheme of things". In Rifkin's thinking, this is of crucial importance when assessing cause and effect.

The materialists view the marketplace as the critical social institution and primary arbiter of human relations. The problem is that their analysis is at odds with the history of human development. There is not a single instance I know of in which people first came together to establish markets and create trade and then later took on a cultural identity. Nor are there any examples of people first coming together to create governments and only later creating cultures (p.235)....The point is that culture is not and never has been an extension of either the market or the government. Rather, markets and governments are extensions of culture. They are secondary, not primary institutions. They exist by the grace of the cultures that create them. (p.236)

Figure 1. Contrasting value systems in the USA versus the European Union, summarising Rifkin 2004



In earlier work, Rifkin (2000:171-172) expressed deep concern about the marketization of culture as an industrial, commercial enterprise. This is of keenest relevance to our discussion here. In that work, he argued that:

Marketing is the means by which the whole of the cultural commons is mined for valuable potential cultural meanings that can be transformed by the arts into commodified experiences, purchasable in the economy....[In short], marketing is the capitalist system's way of translating cultural norms, practices and activities into commodity forms. Using the arts and communications technologies, marketers ascribe cultural values to products, services and experiences and imbue our purchases with cultural meaning.

For insightful discussion about this, especially keyed to digital technology and a contemporary cultural commons, see the chapter by Murdock. Of course we recognise that culture and economics must not be treated as rigidly contrary phenomena (Jackson & Vipond, 2003). In any social setting, from the most micro to the most macro, the two are quite interdependent (for in-depth discussion here, see the chapter by Ala-Fossi). But there is clearly something important going on here, and figuring out what that is and why it matters focuses attention on the role of media with regard to tensions between localisation and globalisation.

Media and globalization

In recent years PSB institutions seem caught in a radicalized dilemma between two obligations. To serve and preserve national culture and identity has for decades been an essential mandated obligation for PSB in Western Europe. At the same time, being a 'window to the world' has also been central to the remit. For some time now, "globalization" has been a buzzword describing (among other things) rapid changes in national cultures and public institutions, for lamenting a decline of democracy due to weakened parliaments and empowered private transnational enterprises, and for impacting individuals in their ability to navigate between a growing number of social roles and cultural identities. The world is smaller than we previously imagined, one of the strongest impacts to date of globalization, and yet also bigger than we can efficiently grapple with – hundreds of millions of individuals in dozens of countries make billions of choices and all we have are a handful of channels across all the dimensions that together add up to full-scale PSB.

Few people today are solely defined in and by traditional 'local' settings. No longer as restricted by traditions, in the Western hemisphere at least, we all struggle to develop individual life projects, to construct private careers and personal lives (Giddens, 1990). Many renowned scholars have diagnosed the socio-cultural symptoms and effects of globalization on national media cultures (c.f. Tomlinson, 1999; Featherstone et al., 1995; Thompson, 1995; Robertson, 1992; Giddens, 1990; Meyrowitz, 1985). Their insights shed light on striking dilemmas and challenges for current PSB policies. Giddens is especially pertinent here. Taking issue with Lyotard's thesis of post-modernity, he analysed the consequences of modernity on an institutional and individual level and concluded that "...we are moving into one [a period] in which the consequences of modernity are becoming more radicalized and universalized than before" (Giddens, 1990:3). His major contribution was to identify the discontinuities that separate modern social institutions from traditional social orders.

First, Giddens highlights the *pace of change* as rapid transition processes, mainly brought forward by technological innovations, intrude on all other spheres. Second, he stresses the *scope of change*, referring to the interconnections on all levels and aspects of life in different parts of the world that serve to blur traditional restrictions of time and space. Thirdly, Giddens points to the intrinsic *nature of modern* institutions, some not found in prior historic periods. One of the more significant is what he calls "the mechanized technologies of communication" whereby the globalizing impact of media can be traced in media content per se:

... people are contingently aware of many events from all over the world, of which previously they would have remained ignorant. It is that the global extension of the institutions of modernity would be impossible were it not for the pooling of knowledge which is represented by the "news" (Giddens, 1990:77-78)

This awareness of the role of media in everyday social life produces reflexivity: we are keenly conscious of social practices and constantly reassess them with reference to tradition and simultaneously in light of new information provided by media or any other “incoming information” (op. cit. 38). Although sensibilities in relation to tradition differ according to time and place, what characterises modernity is an “appetite for the new” combined with an awareness of applied knowledge as constantly subject to revision. Arguably, the individual increasingly develops a sense of interconnectivity in much broader terms, feeling one’s self to be a citizen of a region (America, Europe, Asia etc.), related to other parts of the world mainly by the constant flow of media inputs, rather than feeling restricted (and safe) within the narrower borders of a local community. All the evidence indicates we now live in an era in which change is far more characteristic than continuity.

So what in the world has changed? The blunt answer is just about everything, and in a remarkably short period. People are still born, live and die the old-fashioned way, but increasingly in Europe fewer are born and more live far longer. People still work for a living, but increasingly in jobs that require less muscle power than brain work. People still live in families, but increasingly what family means, and every permutation it may incorporate, are multiple and diverse. People still communicate, but increasingly via a variety of media technologies of astonishing variety. People still do all the things that humans have always done, but increasingly in diverse individualised ways.

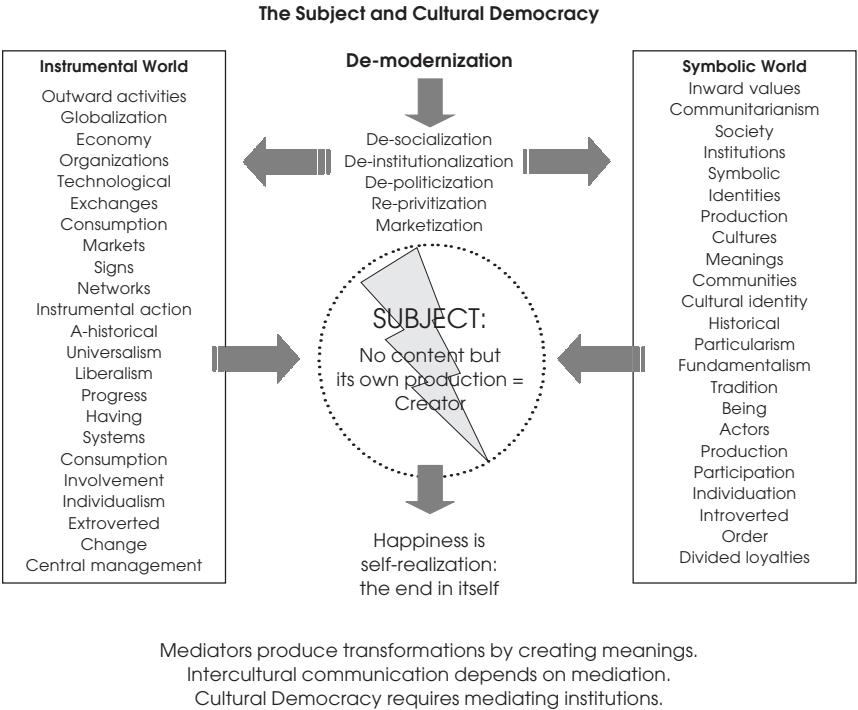
At the same time and not surprisingly, social life and relations are changing. Modernity has come undone (Rifkin, 2004) and post-modernity is without direction (Touraine, 2000). Our treatment so far, keyed to the useful work of Giddens, Meyrowitz, and Featherstone, provides a general framework for what follows, which is more tightly focused on issues of globalization in relation to dynamics of solidarity and segmentation.

The fragmentation of the individual is reflected in and encouraged by the fragmentation of the social collective. Increasingly, fewer seem to believe in modernist philosophy that heralded the universal march of progress, the unitary principle of cohesion, the lionizing of linearity and the respectability of reason. Touraine (2000) argued that we are in the era of “de-modernization”, keyed to the growth and power of globalization. Institutions are being replaced by organisations in processes characterised by re-privatisation, de-socialisation, and de-politicisation. As private life is ever more thoroughly invaded by mass culture and consumerism while public institutions are swept away by privatisation, “globalization has deprived society of its role as the creator of norms” (p.31). The instrumental values inherent in economic and technological development are increasingly divorced from, and even attempting supremacy over, the symbolic values inherent in social and cultural identity. The Subject is fractured as identity is fragmented.

Figure 2 encapsulates Touraine’s argument about this dualistic and duelling dilemma faced by every individual living in Western societies today. The

lines of fracture are between our existence in the Instrumental World of technology and economics with all attendant values, and our existence in the Symbolic World of culture and identities with all attendant meanings. Fractured individuality and society is caused by de-modernisation, characterised by the dynamics noted in the graph. The only possibility for integrating the increasingly divorced halves is for each individual to actively take on the role of Subject, which has no ideological or other content aside from his or her own self-production, a quintessentially creative act. The goal is to achieve happiness, defined as self-realisation.

Figure 2. Summary of the view advanced by Touraine, 2000



Conflict within nation states today, especially but not exclusively in the West, is largely keyed to frictions between ethnic groups. Specifically in the West and particularly of late, this is keyed to cultural differences between immigrant populations versus domestic majorities (Smith, 2005; Pfaff, 2004). Meanwhile, conflict between nations and regions is largely keyed to geo-global competition of various kinds between the “West and the rest,” as Huntington (1996) puts it. Again, the culprit is mainly cultural in complexion. Framing these dynamics with a specific focus on the evolution of democracy, Touraine summarises the matter thusly:

The central conflict in our society is being waged, according to my analysis, by a Subject struggling against the triumph of the market and technologies, on the one hand, and communitarian authoritarian powers, on the other. This cultural conflict seems to me to be as central to our society as economic conflict was to industrial society, and as political conflict was to the first centuries of modernity. (Touraine, 2000:89)

Being able to live together *with* our differences requires reconciling equality and diversity and that can only be achieved via democratic processes. This is why “cultural democracy” (his term) is essential today.

Cultural democracy is the only way to balance the economic and capitalist dynamics of industrial democracy with the civil and social dynamics of social democracy, those two preceding eras framing our contemporary situation. While it remains necessary to have a unitary state, that state can only exist and survive to the extent that it is able to cope effectively with an increasingly diversified society. The essence of solidarity is “the reduction of social inequalities and exclusion. Without that, there can be no recognition of cultural diversity” (Touraine, 2000:227). Democracy is crucial because unity can’t be imposed by either tradition or a globalized economy. In his view, cultural democracy is the next step in the development of democratic practice because it is squarely and primarily about the defence of personal and collective identities. Cultural democracy in practice has three main objectives:

First, it must reduce class differences, and that means strengthening the social and political controls on the economy. Second, it must ensure that cultural diversity is respected, and guarantee social and cultural rights for all. Third, it must take into consideration the demands of those who must not be reduced to being mere consumers of health care, education and information. (Touraine, 2000:250)

Why does any of this matter when thinking about broadcasting and, indeed, about electronic media generally? Why would it matter whether broadcasting is exclusively or even mainly commercial in organisation and objectives, or whether there is any public service alternative? What is at stake when assessing the roles and functions of broadcasting in relation to cultural issues? As it turns out, quite a lot.

This discussion about media’s role in relations between local and global aspects is a major issue in research about globalization. Joshua Meyrowitz (1985) initiated discussion when he argued that electronic media have so invaded private spaces that the one consonant relationship between access to information and access to places has been weakened. As the scale of social setting has changed, the dividing line between private and public behaviour has moved aggressively towards the private, thus highlighting tension between processes of individualisation versus interconnectivity (Meyrowitz, 1985:308). That is one aspect.

The second and a contradictory aspect suggests that a new kind of public sphere is thereby created, a “mediated publicness” not necessarily eroding traditional public spheres but rather adding new dimensions to public life and social institutions (Thompson, 1995:126). Although communication and information are today distributed on a global scale, media content is anyway received by individuals situated in particular localities at specific times. This observation contradicts the notion of a potential suspension of time and space restrictions as a powerful effect of the globalization of mediated communication. To clarify, Thompson focuses on three interrelated issues of the local-global axes.

- (1) Through the local reception process media products are incorporated in practices that shape and change their significance (Thompson 1995:174-175). Based on its hermeneutic character, the reception process therefore depends entirely on the cultural context and the resources audiences can invest in the use of media products
- (2) Individuals are able to create perceptions about ways and conditions of living that are far removed from their personal everyday realities (op.cit.). This is the accentuation of symbolic distancing from the spatial-temporal contexts of everyday life
- (3) The local reception of global media products are also a source of tensions and conflicts, often based on their images and messages that conflict with local cultural values and traditions – resulting in both opposition and attraction. They can assist individuals in imagining alternatives, and thereby facilitate questioning local habits, i.e. traditional norms related to gender, law, religion etc. (op.cit. 196)

The third issue begs a question that is pertinent for PSB today: to what extent has the use of global media products in local contexts, or the tendency in national media to observe and constantly relate to trans-national issues in the total variety of genres, caused local tensions and conflicts? Although never measured to our knowledge, this has to be considerable in relation to the totality of globalizing tendencies in trade, economy, technology, etc. Without doubt, this essential aspect of local-global axes in the distribution and reception of media must influence the conditions for PSB institutions. In relation to core parts of their remit, this is about how PSB handles the dilemma of being custodians of a diluted national identity amid a variety of heterogeneous cultures on the one hand, and simultaneously acting as explorers of global orientation on the other.

Although everyone seemingly agrees that broadcast media have some role of decisive importance in determining the quality of social life and the character of cultural relations, specifics about that role vary quite a lot. Much of the variance hinges on one's view of the benefits or detriments of condoning a multicultural society. Thus, a problem of defining importance for Huntington (1996) hinges on concern that Americans are increasingly frag-

mented in cultural relations because a sizeable portion of the population is embracing multiculturalism. In Huntington's view it is quite all right, even necessary, to have global multiculturalism, but it's not at all right to pursue national multiculturalism. In his view, that is tantamount to "cultural suicide":

The American multiculturalists...reject their country's cultural heritage. Instead of attempting to identify the United States with another civilization, however, they wish to create a country of many civilizations, which is to say a country not belonging to any civilization and lacking a cultural core. A multicivilizational United States will not be the United States; it will be the United Nations. The multiculturalists also challenged a central element of the American creed, by substituting for the rights of individuals the rights of groups....[Thus], the futures of the United States and of the West depend upon Americans reaffirming their commitment to Western civilization. (Huntington, 1996:306-307)

While Huntington ardently defends the 'be true to your school' perspective, Touraine (2000) as ardently asserts the 'be true to yourself' view. There is no peaceful or happy societal alternative to not only accommodating but also encouraging multicultural inclusion.

In a world that is changing, where no culture is really isolated, and where men and women from all continents, societies, and all forms and stages of historical development mingle on the streets of the cities, on television screens and on cassettes of world music, it is both ludicrous and dangerous to attempt to defend a timeless identity. If we wish to avoid the purely commercial exploitation of cultural diversity, and if we also wish to avoid a clash of cultures, we therefore have to assign a positive value to these fusions and encounters which allow us all to expand our own experience and to make our own culture more creative. (Touraine, 2000:182)

This contrast rather precisely summarises the core dilemma for contemporary PSB as it grapples with elaborating a renewed cultural mission. Although social life has always been complicated, the changes and contradictions we've been exploring stipulate a context that is increasingly *complex*. PSB is an intersection where all these trends merge and most of these dynamics compete. It's obvious that historic formulations of the PSB cultural mission are antiquated, as critics contend. But contemporary social conditions in Western societies, as described and assessed so far, strongly suggest we must not 'throw the baby out with the bathwater.' Although the traditional Enlightenment mission is no longer operable as initially defined or historically defended, developing a newly enlightened cultural mission is in fact essential for PSB legitimacy.

A newly enlightened mission

In its efforts to help facilitate the assignation of positive value, PSB has been facing challenges from many sides simultaneously over the last decade: commercial competitors on national and international markets, legislative initiatives and regulations at national levels and a growing interest from the EU Commission in the connections between remits and financing PSB, restless audiences and funding shortages and digitisation.

The European Broadcasting Union [EBU] therefore launched an initiative to formulate an over-arching policy with guidelines for national public broadcasters engaged in the process of reformulating their PSB remits. The EBU's Digital Strategy Group did not propose any authoritative definition of PSB. Rather they sought to "suggest an approach to describe the remit and funding of PSB in the digital environment, and to point to a range of elements from which national definitions can be developed" (EBU, 2002:1). In the first paragraph of the report, "Serving social, political and cultural citizenship", three relevant issues were addressed. The obligations for PSB institutions are to:

- Be forums for national and international debate on policy issues, help develop and be part of an international/global public sphere
- Formulate response to the commercial driven market forces [that] encourage universal inclusion into a hybrid global culture. Instead PSB should continue to be dedicated to supporting national culture, producing national programme content, supporting national languages, art and music
- Reflect the increasingly multi-ethnic and multicultural societies, [but] not by accentuating differences or 'ghettoising' different social and ethnic groups by locking them into "walled gardens" of programme services, dedicated solely to them.

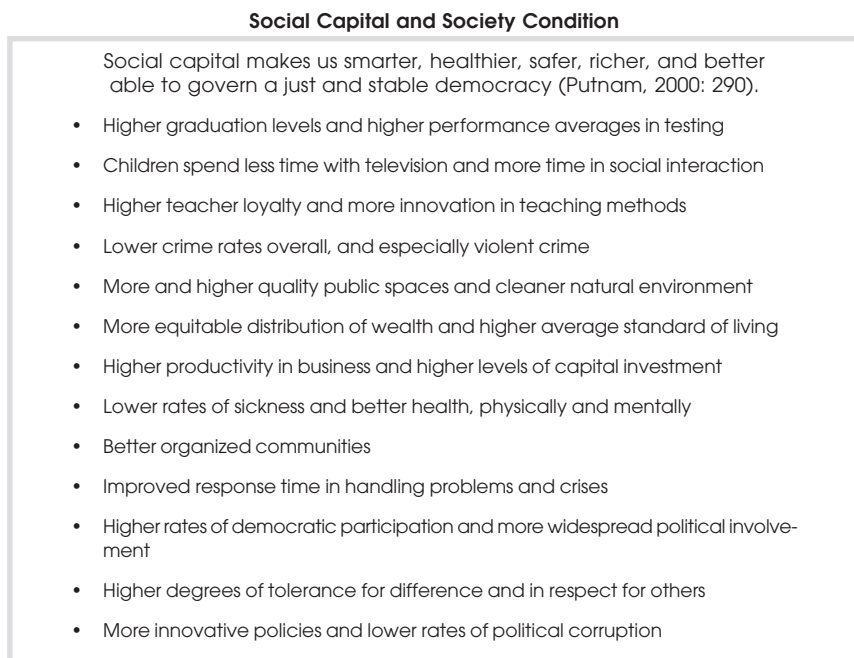
Taken together, it is obvious that EBU members are operating in an area of conflicting and even contradictory positions that certainly reflect the complexity of social life we've been discussing. This sense is strengthened later in the same paragraph where PSB companies are encouraged to provide more personalised services, tailored to the needs of audiences as individuals that accommodate an "individualized communication culture" by means of new technology platforms. In implementation and de facto programme production, PSB institutions face problems in defining the cultural commons of national culture given the specificities of a diversified multi-ethnic cultural sphere that must simultaneously cater to the personal preferences of individualised audience members, although the latter aspect is more related to distribution than to content (for a particularly relevant case, see the chapter by Raboy and Taras).

Clearly one is required to take some stand on such contentious issues. In our case, this stand must have an explicit, defensible connection with the

role and function of public service media in our contemporary societies characterised by these cultural dynamics. That, in turn, requires clarification of what we think public service broadcasting ought to be for and about with regard to its contemporary cultural mission. We therefore argue that the cultural role of PSB today is about *building social capital*.

There are two types of social capital to build (Putnam, 2000). One type is about 'bonding' and the other is about 'bridging.' Bonding is crucial for social solidarity, unity and cohesion. It's about all of us together, and why us *excludes* them. Public service media play a crucial role by maintaining the ties that bind in national terms, and chronicling the clarification of distinctive views (the chapter by From is highly pertinent here). Bridging, on the other hand, is crucial for diversity and plurality. It's also about all of us together. What's different is an emphasis on why us *includes* them. Public service media are crucial for building this kind of social capital as well by ensuring intercultural understandings (for more discussion relative to programming, see the chapter by Bruun). The stakes are highly practical and of deep shared significance. Figure 3 illustrates and is drawn from Putnam's (2000) work. The figure highlights his findings about society standards in the shared quality of life enjoyed by citizens living in U.S. states with higher comparative investment in the institutions, processes and infrastructure needed to build social capital.

Figure 3. Summarising quality of life benefits from social capital investment in the USA



With all of this in mind, we think public service broadcasting has four functions of continuing importance that summarily inscribe its role with regard to the cultural issues discussed and debated in this book.

First, public service broadcasting should be a beneficial socialising agent. People are born into a system and must be socialised. Children are shaped by the experiences and messages they absorb, even as adults are oriented by the diverse and swirling values that situate identities, legitimate choices and reinforce kinds of social relations. Economic capital and political capital are obviously of keen importance, but social capital is less widely understood or broadly prioritised. Socialising with others, and being associated in shared ways of life, is the muscle that builds social capital. In a social context where everything is increasingly individualistic, investment in shared communication infrastructure is an essential driver. Where it has been entrusted to commercial media to handle, one finds a correlated weakening of participation in community and public affairs. Putnam (2000) estimates that at least 25 per cent of cause for waning civic engagement among Generation X in the USA is due to the longevity, intensity and constancy of routine commercial media involvement. One dimension of a renewed cultural mission for public service broadcasting is to function as an alternative, even mitigating, agent that facilitates beneficial socialising effects for media's role in those processes.

Second, public service broadcasting should be a robust discursive medium. TV broadcasting is the penultimate medium for the act of witnessing, the development of which has a long and storied history, and also the process of "working through" what it means and how it effects (Ellis, 2000). Something happens. We witness it via television news. Within hours, it becomes a topic of discussion in talk shows (magazine, current affairs, political commentary, etc.). We are working to make sense of what happened and to figure out what we think it means. If of sufficient depth or widespread continuing importance, it may crop up in soap opera programmes as people try to make sense of what things mean in everyday life. Frequently documentaries and dramas are produced about whatever happened, working to put the happening in some historic or emotional context that makes sense in social and cultural terms. Often as well, the culprits and issues appear in sitcoms or other satirical programmes where characters say what many secretly think, but which would otherwise be unsayable in public. Each genre has its role and function in processes of working through. In an era of media abundance and market fragmentation, where the dynamics of differentiation are in the driver's seat, PSB is essential to ensure cross-levelling (unity and cohesion) as well as levelling across (diversity and pluralism). PSB today must defend its obligation to organise and to operate as a full scale portfolio of on-going as well as developmental content services. Thus, a second dimension of a renewed public service cultural mission is to provide the locally situated forum that is essential for witnessing and working through in ways that reflect domestic interests and connect with domestic life.

Third, public service broadcasting should be an essential civil society organisation. Rifkin (2004) rightly observes that the organisation of society is comprised of three essential parts or 'sectors.' Typically the first and second sectors are defined as the market and government. These are frequently construed as two poles – the market economy and the nation-state – which are occasionally in competition but of late mainly in collusion. In the emerging era of a global economy, the waning power of nation-states, and the increasing necessity of a network orientation, the third sector must be primary in his view. Living as a consumer lacks any cohesive or integrating principle. It is exceedingly individualistic in appeal and practice. Moreover, a market is not a social system – it is “a field of strategic action in which actors strive to use an uncontrolled or even unknown environment” (Touraine, 2000:27). Civil society is the forum for reproducing culture in all its forms and where people build social capital and refine norms. It is the greenhouse where cultural values blend and evolve. Public service broadcasting has an irreplaceable role as a civil society organisation [CSO]. Economic consequences are of secondary importance. The goal is to facilitate trust, reciprocity, fairness, and all the other attributes that figure in the quality of life. It is not-for-profit, and must be that to fully benefit society. The success of a CSO is primarily measured by the degree to which it fills a vacuum that would otherwise exist between markets and governments. How that vacuum is filled, and variability in services, is of and for the public's interests (for a relevant case, see the chapter by Schröder and Phillips).

Usually this type of organisation is able to work across national boundaries as representatives of domestic interests. The EBU is a case in point. Its membership includes PSB companies from countries around the world, each distinctive in respects directly keyed to the conditions, preferences and methods characteristic of its domestic domain, but all joined in common cause to advance the interests and develop the possibilities for effectively doing the public service mission. Thus, a third dimension of a renewed public service cultural mission is to act as civil society organisations providing an essential forum for reproducing culture and facilitating growth in social capital.

Fourth, public service broadcasting should be about democratic mediation for intercultural communication. No society can endure without some principle around which unity is achieved. Touraine (2000) suggests that in a world torn between globalization in economy and technology on the one hand, and communitarian identity and conformity on the other, that unifying principle must be *reconciliation*. As Giddens (1990) concurs, each individual must have the freedom and security to pursue a personal life project that depends on according the same rights for all. Simple tolerance isn't good enough because it makes no particular demands for inclusion. People can tolerate each other without communicating much; they can be separate but equal, although inequity in the distribution of wealth, power and opportunity is characteristic there. Recognition is better than tolerance because it

offers some acknowledgement of, and places some value on, social diversity. But it isn't quite good enough because it doesn't pursue integration. It is more respectful, so to say, but still rather limited in communication objectives. The best guarantor for reconciliation is the work required to nurture cultural pluralism.

Inter-cultural communication is the basis for sharing, enriching and developing cultural democracy (the chapter by Wilkinson is particularly relevant here). We must take good and ample care of all the communication tools available in and for our societies to best ensure they are peaceful, vibrant, creative and prosperous. Thus, a fourth dimension of a newly enlightened public service cultural mission is to emancipate inter-cultural communication as both lubricant and glue in pursuit of multicultural pluralism.

Implications

In the chapters that follow, the authors discuss the contemporary relevance of PSB as a culturally obligated and culturally oriented enterprise. They do this from many perspectives and focussed on various dimensions that, taken together, greatly clarify why public service broadcasting is about much more than simply transmitting content. The issues treated in this volume speak fundamentally to how broadcasting ought to be socially harnessed, at least in fair measure, to beneficially serve a variety of contemporary cultural demands. Neither the editors nor the authors suggest that private commercial broadcasting isn't needed. It is valued and respected, despite what we consider to be just criticisms as well as opposition to some of its characteristic features. We collectively defend PSB because there is no adequate, visible or mandated substitute for its role and functions with regard to a much needed and thoroughly modernised cultural mission, and one that arguably can't be handled by private commercial media.

Summarily, the portent of this work is relevant in deciding the kind of world we want to live in. Our societies, indeed our world, is being transformed. What kind of society do we want to build next? What kind of social and cultural environment do we want to live in now? Are we still willing to work, and when necessary to sacrifice, to create a society of have this *and* have that too, or are we ethically satisfied to accept a world that is increasingly divided between haves and have-nots? Such sentiments aren't merely the elegant turn of a shapely phrase. They are about those qualities of social character rooted most deeply in the habits of the heart.

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PSB QUALITY, PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT
AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Culture and Quality in Broadcast Media

Market Dynamics and Organizational Dependencies

Marko Ala-Fossi

Although economic and cultural perspectives have typically been treated as an opposition, this is arguably misleading. In this chapter I will argue that culture and economics comprise an interdependent relationship. In media production two things are evident. First, there is no economic system that is not at least partly shaped by cultural matters, and second that all expressions of culture have an economic dimension. When viewed from a functional perspective on these social formations, culture and economy clearly have a dialogic relationship. Following Schein ([1985] 1991:65), the primary function of culture is to provide solutions to the problems of living, survival and adaptation. Following Power (1988:8-9), economy is not only understood as business or markets but also as rational development and the use of society's scarce resources. Thus, culture informs the allocation of scarce resources, which in turn reproduces culture. As Power (1988:24) put it, "cultures and societies, no matter how primitive they are, are not only concerned about staying alive, but living in a particular style. That is what human culture is all about". Here I work to apply the understandings to PSB and other media to generate useful insights about the role of culture in defining and producing quality in modern and increasingly cost-efficient, market-oriented PSB.

In media practice, there are two economies of culture: the economy of production and the economy of consumption (Storey, 1998:225). This chapter concentrates on production. It goes beyond the economic aspects of ownership and finance to investigate quality differences between production in commercial and public service broadcasting [PSB] companies. It seeks to integrate theoretical perspectives on quality, keyed to culture and economics, in pursuit of a more comprehensive understanding of media production. I developed the approach in my dissertation, focused on maturing theoretical understandings of quality culture in commercial radio by creating a value-pluralistic theoretical framework where cultural and economic aspects of commercial radio production can be studied simultaneously. The approach works to avoid the pitfalls of economic determinism as well as cultural relativism. Understanding the economic side of production is essen-

tial for understanding the cultural side, and vice versa (Meehan et al., 1994:351-354; Storey, 1998:188 & 199).

Theoretical foundations of the integrated approach

The integrated theoretical approach to quality considered here is based on different theories about media and quality. There are compatible ideas that can be linked, but also conflicting and contradictory ideas. We begin with a brief summary of seven theoretical perspectives used to build the integrated approach I am advocating. Here the goal is to find connections in order to build bridges.

Media system dependency theory (DeFleur & Ball-Rockeach, 1989). This approach describes the structure of media systems, the composite nature of media content quality, and the interdependent relations between different social systems. Positioning culture and the general norms of a society as a comprehensive environment is important. Although this notion isn't fully developed in theoretical terms, culture provides a general normative framework for social processes. The main weakness lies in considering the media system mainly as an information resource in relation to political interests with other social systems that largely neglects economic dimensions.

Media performance studies (McQuail, 1992). This approach equates quality with characteristics of media content and media structure in relation to norms and values, under the rubric of the public interest. That is why the emphasis is focused on social responsibility of media. The approach is useful for assessing the social quality of media from the perspective of a wider society. But McQuail (1992) seems to assume that values are rather stable. As with the first theory, media performance study sees culture as a normative frame and part of a social order. It differs, however, in understanding media content as an expression of a society's culture. Moreover, McQuail (1992) has identified the affect of organizational cultures and professional subcultures connected to different interest groups.

Quality assessment from multiple perspectives (Rosengren et al., 1996). This approach incorporates four perspectives on quality. Rosengren et al. devote less attention to normative theories and a general framework to instead focus on ideas about quality within a professional culture. The most important finding is the notion of quality as indicative of a relation between defining characteristics and a set of determining values. Although the authors refer to the competitive situation between public service and commercial broadcasters, and to relations between programming quality and available resources, these were not discussed in detail. But the authors suggest that success and high quality are related to large resources, and that both commercial and public service media can produce quality, although sometimes of different kinds (Rosengren et al., 1996:3, 39 & 42).

Media economics (Picard, 1989; Sohn et al., 1999). This approach is crucial for maturing understanding about the economic environment of commercial media organization, and especially for treating the basic economic motives of the commercial operation. But the approach tends to frame all social interaction as market-based and -driven, neglecting political dimensions. For example, “the marketplace of ideas” is a metaphor and arguably not a commercial market at all. It represents that sociopolitical role that gives media their special place in society (Sohn et al., 1999:231; McQuail, 2000:147; Napoli, 2001b:103-108). Moreover, although economic activities are dominated by judgements guided by cultural norms and values (Power 1988: 11-12), economic analysis tends to neglect or oversimplify cultural aspects. However, media economics does identify organizational culture as an important economic factor affecting the labor market (Picard, 1989:9 & 103-105; Sohn et al., 1999:59-62; Fox 1997:36-43).

Political economy (Mosco, 1996; Garnham, 1990; Murdock & Golding 1974). This approach offers a clear perspective for studying connections between economic structure and the quality of media output, although it lacks theoretical ideas about quality in media production. The approach courts the danger of falling prey to economic determinism, which is directly connected to its unfortunately limited perspective on culture. While the approach is an essential tool for analyzing the motives and objectives behind media production, judgments and analysis concerning quality can't be fairly reduced solely to the mode of production. The typically strong normative tone of political economy is also problematic for analysis of quality in commercial media. Quality in production isn't based solely on economic considerations, and the meanings of media products are not totally predetermined. They may even have beneficial social effects that one could not assume on the basis of the original motives for production.

Cultural economy (Du Gay, 1997; Du Gay & Pryke, 2002). This approach suggests that all economic processes and practices are cultural phenomena. Economics work through language and signs: markets and organizations are not only socially constructed, they are comprised by such economic discourses as accounting and finance. In addition, cultural economy suggests that the production of culture can't be separated from industrial processes and forms of organization. That means it can't fairly be understood only as an economic process. Finally, cultural economy highlights the increasing importance of culture in business. Large businesses producing cultural goods are among the most powerful corporations in the world today, and practically every product is marketed to consumers using cultural tools to shape meanings. (Du Gay, 1997:3-7; Du Gay & Pryke, 2002:2-12). The approach certainly has merit in combining the aspects of cultural analysis with economic consideration. The basic idea is that all economic activities are thoroughly affected and informed by culture, and cultural issues have increasing importance in all business operations. Despite these strengths, if cultural economy is assessed as a bridge or mediator between cultural studies and political economy

then one must agree with Sanghera (2003a and 2003b) who argues that cultural economy has several weaknesses. Cultural economy seems to identify economy primarily with markets and to celebrate consumer choice (cf. Negus, 2002). There are also hints of ahistoric tendencies (cf. Salaman, 1997). These features align cultural economy with the neoclassical economic paradigm, and place it in conflict with political economy.

Quality management theory (Lillrank, 1990; Lillrank, 1998). This approach identifies six industrial perspectives on quality. Production-oriented quality (1) is about avoiding defects in manufacture. Product-oriented quality (2) is interested in how well the product or service specifications are met. Expense-oriented quality (3) evaluates quality in relation to the cost or price of the product. The competition-oriented view (4) suggests the customer creates a personal comprehension of quality by comparing the product to its competitors. Thus, the quality of the product is evaluated in relation to competitors and the market situation. Customer-oriented quality (5) is about the ability of a product or service to fulfill the customers needs and expectations. In this approach, quality is a subjective and constantly changing variable. Lillrank's essential contribution was the addition of society- or environment-oriented quality (6) that measures the quality of a product in relation to its total effects on society and nature (Lillrank, 1998: 28; Lipponen, 1993:34-37).¹

Quality management theory offers useful tools for analyzing the multidimensional nature of quality in media production, but doesn't link with any tradition in communications research. That can be partly fixed because the approach can be linked to economic theory and media economics. A more pressing problem lies in the relations posited with society at large. The addition of the society-oriented quality aspect is a good start, but Lillrank agrees the concept is anyway vague (1998:38). Finally, although organizational culture is a centerpiece of this approach, the understanding of culture is limited.

Multiple roles and dimensions of culture

Clearly these theories about and perspectives on media quality and economics approach the notion of culture differently. Perhaps the most problematic is political economy, which tends to consider culture as a result of the mode of production, largely determined by economics. Political economy has traditionally seen culture as subordinate to economic restraints and largely neglects the influence of culture on economic decisions. Although critical political economy and cultural studies share meta-theoretical features and Marxian influence, there has been dispute between these two research traditions (Mosco, 1996:248; Skjerdal, 1998; Meehan et al., 1994:351). Political economy has been criticized for reductionism, economic determinism and an inability to consider the meanings of texts and practices. On the other hand, political economists contend that cultural studies mainly celebrate

consumption of cultural goods and seek to explain the economic base via cultural artifacts (Storey, 1998:220-225; Skjerdal, 1998). Mosco (1996) has tried to promote “a renewed political economy” that combines the approaches. According to Skjerdal (1998), even “renewed” political economy still suffered the tendency to induct all analysis to class power alone.

But in itself, neither political economy nor cultural studies offer sufficient tools for necessary analysis of media quality, culture or economics. For example, a popular music or entertainment program produced by a publicly owned broadcasting company will not automatically be in every way superior to its commercially produced counterpart, much less only due to its mode of production. On the other hand, concentrating only on the readings of the output would render insufficient analysis of that mode (Meehan et al., 1994:352-353).

It is possible to create a mediating connection between these traditions by using Althusser's idea of “structure in dominance”: he argued that “although economic is always determinant, this does not mean that in particular historical conjuncture it will necessarily be dominant” (Storey, 1998:115). In other words, economic practice will determine which of the three practices of social formation (economic, political and ideological) is dominant. This fits with the ideas of cultural economy (based on a cultural studies tradition), which argues that it is impossible to escape culture in economic decision-making.

The idea or role of culture as ubiquitous context for all social activities is in harmony with media system dependency theory and media performance studies. Both suggest that culture provides a general normative framework for all and different social processes. Like air, it is everywhere and, even when invisible, is always an influential factor of human activities. This is perhaps closest to a general definition of culture as a particular way of life shared by a group of people (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989:6; Storey, 1998:2). Media content is not only commodity. Production is informed by simultaneous economic and cultural factors, which are also cultural artifacts and parts of a larger fabric, which express the culture of a society and also “portray the life of society to society” (Turow, 1997:18-19).

These theoretical approaches provide at least one more dimension of importance for any fair examination of culture in the context featured in this chapter. The special nature of subcultures – in this case especially organizational and professional cultures – is emphasized by quality management, media economics, cultural economy and quality assessment. Quality management is largely based on the idea that organizational cultures can be managed for better performance. Cultural economy agrees that better economic results can be achieved by managing the culture of organization. But of course it would be a mistake to think that organizational cultures are simple unified systems. They are composed of different, often contending, professional (and other) subcultures. In addition, every person has layers or dimensions of cultural and professional history, and especially identities, which affect interpretations of quality, culture and economics.

Table 1. Summary of rejected and accepted ideas for integrated approach

Theoretical approach	Rejected ideas	Accepted ideas
Media system dependency theory	- Media system is only an information resource for other social systems - Media ownership has no significant role in shaping media output	✓ The basic structure of the system ✓ Interdependent relationships between social systems ✓ A media system pursues financial stability ✓ Culture as a condition of the social system
Media performance studies	- Norms and values of the public interest are stable - Society standpoint equals the tradition of regulatory policies	✓ Social quality of media can be assessed using McQuail's (1992) framework ✓ Different occupational and interest groups shape media quality ✓ Culture plays varying roles for media performance
Quality assessment of broadcasting		✓ Quality is always a relation between characteristics and a set of values ✓ There is no absolute quality, instead several different co-existing quality perspectives
Media economics	- All social interaction happens in markets - Advertisers buy media space or time - Consumption is an indicator of satisfaction - High ratings=high program quality - Bigger budgets=better programming	✓ Interdependent social relationships can be described also as economic markets ✓ Media organizations operate simultaneously in several markets ✓ Commercial media operates primarily for economic profit
Critical political economy of communication	- Mode of production determines the (social) quality of the media - Meanings of commercial media products are predetermined	✓ Economic structures affect media quality ✓ Media is both political and economic ✓ All social activities do not happen in economic markets based on pricing ✓ Advertisers buy audiences from commercial media
Cultural economy	- Economy equals markets and commercial business - Historical context can be more or less neglected	✓ All economic activities are thoroughly affected and informed by culture ✓ Cultural issues are increasingly important for business operations
Quality management	Consumption is an indicator of quality and satisfaction	✓ Quality is measured in transaction ✓ There are at least six co-existing perspectives to quality which together can be used to describe quality culture ✓ Each group has its own perspective ✓ Consumer quality may lead into externality

Thus, we can specify three different but co-existing dimensions of culture. First and most generally, culture is a social and normative context (and framework) for all human activities. Second, inside the large national or regional frameworks, different groups in particular organizations, as well as professionals within them, tend to have their own subcultures with distinctive values and practices. Third, culture can be seen as patterns of human behavior and the artifacts that are evidence of mental and physical creations. Such cultural artifacts, for example in technology or fine art, are manifestations of other levels of culture. In the case of media content, they may also reflect and portray ideas about the social reality among people sharing the same or a similar culture: others may not be able to interpret them at all, and certainly not with the rich nuance and deep connections originally intended.

This categorization is reminiscent of the three levels of culture suggested by Schein ([1985]1991:31-36). In his view, the first level of culture is 1) artifacts and creations: art, technology and behavior patterns, which are visible but not always decipherable. The second level is 2) values, which inform how things ought to be and what is seen as good or desirable. Many values are conscious and explicit, but some may also transform into 3) underlying, invisible basic assumptions, which operate on the third, unconscious level. Another three-dimensional model of culture was treated by Lowe (2000), based on his research about Finnish public service radio professionals during the 1990's. Those public broadcasters described the practical dimensions of culture as three overlapping but distinct notions: culture was seen 1) as expert production units, 2) as a series of cultural artifacts, 3) or as the medium and expressions of living social experience (Lowe, 2000:17-19).

Integrated theoretical approach to quality culture – four markets and two arenas

An integrated approach gives a possibility to fix, or at least avoid, some of the most obvious problems of the theories discussed. Perhaps the best starting point comes from Rosengren et al. (1996): the quality of media is not a characteristic but instead a relation between characteristics and a set of values. The same characteristic of media content can represent high quality in relation to one set of values but low quality in relation to another set of values, and both at the same time. This requires a plurality or at least multiplicity of values. However, this does not necessarily mean falling prey to relativism because it is still possible to make normative judgements between different value sets and “qualities” related to them (Storey, 1998:199).

Most approaches discussed earlier have actually supported the idea that the quality of media output is a composite of several different needs and wants. Some of these are internal of course, but media must shape its content also for the needs and wants of other social forces. The commercial media

Table 2. The primary interest groups shaping the output quality of commercial media

DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach 1989	McQuail 1992	Picard 1989
Audiences	Audience	Media owners
Research organizations	Advertisers	Audiences
Distributors of content	Sources	Advertisers
Producers	Owners	Media employees
Sponsors (advertisers)	Government	Public wants and needs
Advertising agencies	Social / political institutions	
Legislative bodies	Investors	
Regulatory agencies	Pressure groups	
External conditions:		
Taste and morality norms		
Cultural norms		
Beliefs of cultural preferences		

organization operates primarily to generate economic profit. It has a strong internal motive: profit or die. DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach (1989) listed several needs and wants commercial media try to satisfy in order to maintain financial stability. It is interesting that the owners of media seem to have no direct role in their system, while both McQuail (1992) and Picard (1989) considered the owners among the most powerful groups affecting media quality (see Table 2.). Political economy explains media content quality primarily on the basis of the ownership structure.

All these interest groups have interdependent relationships with the media organization. They need certain resources from each other to reach their respective goals. That's why these groups are (and must be) in transaction with the media organization. Although the nature of these transactions is not always financial and the different groups are not always trying to generate economic profit, the transactions force these groups to assess media content quality in relation to their needs and wants, as suggested in the quality management approach.

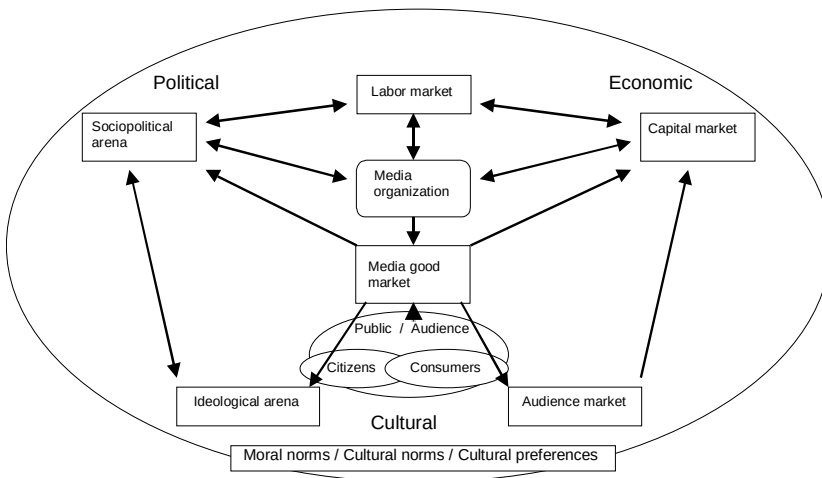
Media economics offers a way to present and explain these interdependent relationships by using the economic concept of market. This is a very useful approach in those cases where markets actually exist. And there are certainly multiple markets. I propose three: a *media goods market*, a *capital market* and a *labor market*. These fulfill the essential requirements for an economic market. Media consumers in the media goods market are paying with money or time for particular kinds of media content to satisfy their subjective needs, while the owners and investors in the capital market evaluate the quality of the media content in relation to return on their investments. At the same time, media professionals in the labor market assess the quality of media output and production in relation to their professional and creative ambitions, as well as their personal salaries and other satisfactions.

However, as the political economy approach suggests, “the advertising market” is actually an *audience market*. Advertising-supported media firms are producing audiences through the media goods market. Media consumers spending time and attention on media goods consumption are the raw material for audience as commodity (Napoli, 2001a: 66). They are described with ratings and sold as prospective audiences (Smythe, 1977). But “the marketplace of ideas” is not a market in any economic sense. It shouldn’t even be referred to as a market. This conceptual space is more usefully conceptualized as “the public sphere” (McQuail, 2000:147, 157-158; Napoli, 2001b:101).

In the context of the argument I am making here, I prefer to define this as the *ideological arena*. The same consumers of media goods are the “raw material” for the public, which is created by the political and ideological dimension (Murdoch & Golding, 1974:206-207) of the media for the needs of the society and the state. Because both audiences and public are produced through the consumption of media content, the media goods market is vital also for socially-oriented purposes, especially public service broadcasting. In addition, these media goods are also cultural artifacts, essential for the social role of the media (Turow, 1997:18-19).

In this work I use the term *sociopolitical arena* to describe all the interactions and transactions between the media organization and the sociopolitical system. The media organization needs freedom and rights, and in the case of broadcasting also licenses. The government and sociopolitical institutions expect media to enhance democratic process by creating an ideological arena (a public sphere), and also to serve social and cultural goals; e.g., to support citizenship and serve the publics’ interests (McQuail, 2000:147; Napoli, 2001b:17 & 99-105). As suggested in media system dependency

Figure 1. Media organization in a socioeconomic system



theory, as well as the social responsibility approach, in return the media organization may expect to retain its role as a public trustee with certain special privileges. The idea of this complex socioeconomic system is pictured in Figure 1.

In this way, we can lay a basis for utilizing multiple perspectives on quality in a commercial media organization that can be derived also from the basic social and economic setting of the organization rather than only from the historical development of quality control and management ideas in commodity production (Lillrank, 1998). Each market and arena in which the media organization has to participate, produces different perspectives on media content quality in relation to its own respective needs and goals. To ensure its economic viability and existence, a commercial media organization has to combine and compromise these sometimes even controversial perspectives in media content production. Although this integrated approach concentrates more on quality as defined via transactions in the markets and arenas, all the transactions and assessments are constantly affected also by cultural and moral norms, as well as by cultural preferences and beliefs about them.

Having dealt with theoretical perspectives in pursuit of an integrated approach to understanding cultural dimensions in quality assessment, we can now turn explicitly to six perspectives on quality in media production.

Six perspectives on quality in media production

Rosengren et al. (1996) and McQuail (1992), as well as Alm (1993) and Lillrank (1998), present different ideas about quality types or perspectives. The most obvious common denominator is the idea of 1) *socially-oriented quality*. Lillrank's society- or system-oriented quality and Alm's business environment-oriented quality are very closely related to McQuail's idea of media performance in the public interest. This quality perspective is about the social effects of the media, especially media content quality, in relation to social objectives and the common good or public interest. Although Rosengren et al. (1996), in their analysis of public service broadcasting, connected the idea of sender use quality to the social functions of the media, the idea of sender should be reconsidered here. Their idea of 'descriptive quality' can be connected directly to dimensions of diversity and information quality in the purview of socially oriented quality. This quality perspective reflects the wants and needs of the sociopolitical arena, as well as the operational aspects of the ideological arena.

In its strictly original meaning, the idea of customer-oriented quality in commercial broadcasting would mean quality in relation to the needs and wants of advertisers. In the commercial broadcasting industry they are, in most cases, the only customers paying directly with money (Kessler, 1994; Lillrank, 1998). This is at odds, however, with the idea of receiver use qual-

Table 3. Comparison and synthesis of quality perspectives

Rosengren et al. (1991/1996)	((McQuail(1992)	Alm (1992a&b/1993)	Lilrank (1990) (Lipponen 1993)	Synthesis of Quality perspectives
		Production oriented quality (consistency of programming through profiling and formatting)	Production oriented quality (avoiding defects)	Production oriented quality Consistency Faultlessness No deviations
Professional quality (message – professional competence)	(product quality) (occupational groups)	Product oriented quality (professional use of new forms of expression both in content and form)	Product oriented quality (correlation to product standards)	Product oriented quality Product standards Professional values Cultural history
Sender use quality (message – sender)	(efficiency) (pricing)	Resource oriented quality (efficient use of resources and professional competence)	Expense oriented quality (quality in relation to the costs)	Expense oriented quality Cost efficiency Return on investment Profitability
		Competition oriented quality (quality in relation to audience share in local and national audience markets)		
	(market structure)		Competition oriented quality (quality in relation to competitors and market)	Competition oriented quality As good quality as competitors Right quality for the market
Receiver use quality (message – receiver) (ratings as receiver quality defined by outsiders)		Customer oriented quality (quality in relation to the interests and values of the target audience)	Customer oriented quality (quality in relation customer needs and choices)	Consumption oriented quality Consumer quality: Attractive content for the target group (cultural preferences) Customer quality: desired audiences for the advertisers
	Media performance in the public interest	Business environment orientation (reinterpretation of public service radio in the political market)	Society or environment oriented quality (the quality of a product in relation to its total effects on society and nature)	Socially oriented quality Social objectives The public interest Cultural values
	Freedom			
	Equality			
Descriptive quality (message – "reality")	Diversity			
	Information quality			
	Social order and solidarity			
	Cultural order	(an active role in popular culture market)		

ity posited by Rosengren et al. (1996), as well as Alm's (1993) idea of radio listeners in the target group as customers. However, all radio listeners pay for the programming at least with their time. Basically, commercial radio may therefore consider both listeners and advertisers as clients, although in the end this view of quality is primarily about consumption. Listener's needs and wants have an instrumental value because attractive media content is mainly an effective way to produce desired kinds of audiences for advertisers. This is why extensive market research is done to ascertain the target group preferences, and why ratings as the measurement of media consumption is in the most central role. By targeting to media consumers, commercial media organizations are actually serving the advertisers as their primary customers. In this way, 2) *consumption-oriented quality* basically reflects the needs of the audience market (i.e., a market where audiences are sold and bought).

3) *Competition-oriented quality* had a different meaning for Alm (1993) than Lillrank originally suggested (see Table 3.). Alm (1993) argued that it can be measured directly by the shares of audience ratings in different markets. That idea had purpose for Alm (see endnote 1), but originally competition-oriented quality has meant more direct comparison between the product and competing products, and consecutive adaptation of product quality for the market situation (Lipponen 1993). Competition-oriented quality is thus also linked to market structure and product strategy (McQuail 1992: 87-89). Competition oriented quality in commercial radio therefore means market analysis of the media goods market, and a comparison of the programming with the competing stations or comparison of the audience product with one's rivals. In both cases, the possible change in competitive strategy will necessarily also mean changes in the media goods product quality. As a result, competition-oriented quality is mostly connected with supply and demand in the media goods market.

4) *Expense-oriented quality* originally meant offering a sufficient cost-benefit ratio for the paying customer (Lipponen, 1993). But Alm (1993) presented a slightly different interpretation by suggesting that efficient use of resources could also improve listener satisfaction by providing value for the paid license fee. However, it is more obvious that internal cost-efficiency of production would satisfy the upper management and the owners of the organization rather than the listening audience, especially because the connection between the license fee and (radio) programming is hardly obvious. Because large turnover does not directly result in large profits, cost-efficiency is directly linked to the "business criteria" of performance, profitability and the amount of return on investment (McQuail, 1992:89-90). Thus, expense-oriented quality can be connected to the wants and needs of the capital market. In the case of commercial broadcasting, also the idea of sender use quality by Rosengren et al. (1996) fits best with expense-oriented quality. The cost-effective use of resources in content production is parallel to the needs of the owners of the organization, which are in this case also the senders of the message.

Product-oriented quality and production-oriented quality are both primarily connected to the internal needs and goal setting of the organization. Product-oriented quality is about quality in relation to the product design and specifications, which in the case of commercial radio means quality in relation to the station format and playlist, as well as rotation clocks. However, the employees of the organization assess product-oriented quality also in relation to their own professional values and personal ambitions (McQuail, 1992:83). In this way, 5) *product-oriented quality* is also linked to the labor market (Picard 1989). If the employees cannot accept the product standards or align their professional values with them, they will want to find another job. Moreover, as Negus (2002) has suggested, decisions about product standards are not separated from the personal cultural histories of decision-makers.

6) *Production-oriented quality* in commercial radio can be understood very much in the same way as Alm framed it (1993): it is most of all about consistency and predictability. Unpredicted, or more precisely uncontrolled, deviations are unwanted characteristics for obvious economic reasons (see also Turow, 1984:156). Although it might seem to be appropriate to connect or equate the descriptive quality of programming by Rosengren et al. (1996) with production-oriented quality, this would be an incorrect interpretation. Correspondence between the message and the real world is not an absolute value in itself, or for a media organization, in every type and genre of programming. Untrue or fictional messages are not necessarily defective. On the other hand, the relationship of media content and social reality has great social value, especially in news production. Thus, the idea of descriptive quality must be understood primarily as part of socially-oriented quality, as earlier noted.

The quality culture of a media organization

Each of these six quality perspectives indicates connections to the macro-level socioeconomic structure. They are also directly linked to the micro-level organizational structure of any particular media organization. To give an example, one can assume that broadcast engineers concentrate on the technical aspects of production-oriented quality when handling such things as signal strength and image stability. Media professionals with strong journalistic values, on the other hand, will emphasize socially-oriented quality – is the story fair, accurate, balanced, etc.? Producers or middle management must worry as much about product-oriented quality and meeting specifications. Meanwhile, the advertising sales department most highly values competition-oriented quality and consumption-oriented quality perspectives, even while the upper management and owners of the organization will certainly appreciate expense-oriented quality. Clearly, every quality perspective has its primary proponents inside the organization according to the connections

they have with the different interest groups (McQuail, 1992:79-80 & 83; Lillrank, 1998:40; Lowe & Alm, 1997).

Thus, quality culture is based both on national and organizational cultures (Lillrank, 1998:151-152). Each nation and each organization has its culture of shared philosophies, traditions, assumptions, beliefs, values, norms, working methods and so forth. However, as already noted, an organizational culture is not a single unified system: cultural variations and different subcultures exist, even in small organizations (Gummeson, 1991:94; Picard, 2002a:207). That's why organizational culture is not primarily about everybody idealistically sharing the same values. It is more about identifying those values that really are shared in the organization in its social reality. Some organizations are culturally more simple and may have high degrees of cultural saturation, while others are more complex with many subcultures and only a few common features (Griseri, 1998:70-71).

According to Schein (1991:31-36), the core of culture lies in unconscious basic assumptions. However, the company culture of a media firm becomes visible through its organizational conduct because that guides and predicts the processes and products. Of course it can sometimes be found in written form in company handbooks or employee orientations (Sohn et al., 1999:36 & 42-43; Picard, 2002a:207). But because of the unconscious nature of many basic assumptions, the interpretations of an organizational culture are usually based on artifacts and values (Kekäle, 1998:29-30). Thus, the quality culture of a media organization can be understood as a structure of values that is not a stable system.

The idea of good quality – the relation between product characteristics and a set of values – is an ever impermanent result of continuous processes of transaction and assessment. Changes in the wants and needs characterizing the social, political and cultural environment, as well in the internal situation of the organization itself, will affect the status of quality culture and the definitions of good quality. If media consumers change their consumption habits, if the regulations on media are revised or competitors redesign their products, if the advertisers become interested in different audiences or the financial expectations of the owners become more demanding, it will be reflected in the quality culture of the media organization. The assessment of media quality is not connected only to direct transaction or exchange, but more generally it is connected to allocation of scarce resources in a system of interdependent relationships between media and other social groups or systems.

The quality culture is therefore constantly redefined inside the media organization in relation to developments of and in other social systems (markets and arenas), which have, in turn, interdependent relations with the media organizations. This basic idea is consistent with the theoretical model of value transformation in a multi-market broadcasting environment first suggested by Lowe & Alm (1997). In this way, the quality culture and its ideas of good quality is a relative, multidimensional, as well as historical and constantly

changing or evolving result of combining controversial, contradictory and competing perspectives on quality.

Quality in PSB production and commercial production – what is the difference?

At this point it should be obvious that quality perspectives may have different weight and importance for PSB and commercial organizations in different markets and historical situations. Because of space restrictions, I will concentrate on analyzing each perspective separately rather than discussing all the possible combinations.

From the production-oriented quality perspective, the differences between commercial and PSB productions are not inevitable. Both types of organizations strive for faultlessness in their productions; unpredicted deviations are not welcome. One could perhaps argue that the direct financial risk drives commercial operators towards even more predictable, patterned, consistent and compatible productions than is typical within PSB (cf. Turow, 1984). But patterned programming (e.g., program series) is cheaper to produce than the same number of unique productions. In addition, the ratings of a serial or formatted type of programming are easier to predict than the ratings of a single show. This is why cost-effectiveness, and at least indirectly market-dependency, also encourages PSB to favor consistency and predictability.

Product-oriented quality also doesn't discriminate well between commercial and PSB production. Product standards in PSB production have usually been considered higher than in commercial production overall, but increasingly PSB programming is produced by commercially operated independent production houses or other domestic subcontractors, and also imported from foreign, strictly commercial broadcasters. In addition, PSB broadcasters have successfully adapted product standards and certain professional values that earlier were mainly typical for commercial operators. On the flip side, some commercial operators have succeeded in creating commercially viable products out of traditionally PSB-type programming (for example, Discovery and the History Channel). Although it may come as a surprise to some, people aren't born to be dedicated PSB broadcasters with stable PSB professional values: the cultural, educational and professional backgrounds of commercial broadcasters and PSB broadcasters are not totally separate entities. Professionals move back and forth in the labor market. Moreover, professional values transform over time. However, high product standards and traditional PSB professional values may still have a special importance – especially for the production of news and current affairs programming, but also arguably in entertainment production.

The expense-oriented quality perspective has never been insignificant for PSB productions, but since the 1980's its importance and weight constantly

increased. High cost-efficiency is one of the main dimensions of the new social responsibilities of PSB. The public funds collected via license fees have to be used as effectively as possible to reach as many people as possible. Although PSB organizations are usually not striving for maximum return on investments or profitability, and many are even prohibited from earning any profits, the cost of PSB service can be (and increasingly is) evaluated in relation to the program offer. Moreover, ratings can be used here as a measure of PSB productivity (program consumption / money used in production). In this way, expense-oriented quality in PSB and commercial productions are rather similar. The biggest difference is, that while commercial operators tend to concentrate only on such productions and production methods, which result in the highest cost-efficiency and best possible return on investment, PSB can and also should produce (cost-efficiently, of course) more risky and expensive projects.

For the commercial operators, the competition-oriented quality perspective for programming may be of deeper and also broader importance than for PSB because all PSB organizations don't have to compete for advertisers with program quality. But both commercial and PSB productions are anyway competing in the media goods market for audiences as program consumers. In order to be successful in this competition, one must know the opponent. But an organization that only reacts and follows others will lose its identity and competitive edge. Also PSB organizations have been tempted to adopt commercial practices. Can that be done while preserving the strength and courage to remain true to their original ideals (and mission) when applying these new (for them) methods for success? Fortunately, the competition also has reverse effects on commercial operators meaning that strong and vital PSB organizations with successful programming have an impact on the commercial competitors' programming. PSB organizations with considerable market share can set the standards for others to follow – but only if they've not lost their own standards.

As we have noted, PSB is also dependent on the labor market, and at least partially dependent on the capital market (through the cost of financing, etc.). But interestingly (and sometimes problematically) PSB is not always dependent on the audience market. When a PSB organization carries no advertising it is free from the needs and desires of advertisers, which indirectly decreases its dependence on the capital market. However, as long as a PSB organization measures its success in market shares and ratings, it is at least indirectly dependent on the amount of program consumption in the media goods market. Commercial operators emphasize consumption-oriented quality and attractive content mainly for instrumental reasons keyed to audience production. Also for PSB organizations, reaching audiences and serving their needs is not a goal in itself. PSB organizations are interested in program consumption mainly because that is necessary for creating the ideological arena (public sphere), and thus is arguably a precondition for serving the public interest and at the same time legitimizing the continuation of

license fee funding. Perhaps surprisingly, then, the public and the audience are created in essentially similar ways if not for precisely similar reasons.

I therefore suggest that the main differences between PSB productions and commercial productions are related to socially-oriented quality. First, PSB has productions for which the true social or cultural quality and importance lies outside the media goods market. That is especially evident in services for minority groups. The sheer existence of such services has been socially crucial, even when the level of program consumption in these services isn't. On the other hand, the PSB organization has special social responsibilities for fairly and accurately, and comprehensively, portraying the society view for the society's view, and thereby supporting both national as well as minority cultures. That is an essential dimension of the "culture commons" notion in practical terms. To some extent, these goals may be served also by commercial operators – but mainly and significantly that is most likely only if and when a PSB organization has sufficient status and impact on the market where operations are targeted.

License-fee funding makes PSB dependent on the sociopolitical system. If the socially-oriented quality of PSB productions does not meet the expectations of the sociopolitical arena, the financial (and political) position of PSB will quickly become difficult, if not impossible. At first sight, it may seem that commercial broadcasters do not benefit financially from the sociopolitical arena. However, private operators use radio spectrum that is a valuable public resource and are not typically charged for that, per se (Hujanen and Lowe, 2003). So far, it has been supposed that their operations will automatically benefit society so much that the privilege of utilizing the spectrum is compensated. This analysis indicates that is an arguably naive idea because the interest of private operators is not at all identical with the public interest.

Note

1. Quality management theory was used by Ari Alm in the development of Yleisradio's Radiomafia for defining the new, expanded quality culture of a Finnish PSB youth channel in 1990 (Alm, 1992a:25-26 & 37; Alm, 1992b:35-37; Alm, 1993:34 & 67). While the traditional public service radio approach was largely a one-dimensional solution for defining quality programming, the quality criteria of a good program product in a new channel culture was fruitfully based on the combination or "integrated complex" of all six perspectives in this quality management approach.

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Defining Distinctiveness

In Search of Public Broadcasting Performance and Quality Criteria

Jo Bardoel, Leen d'Haenens & Allerd Peeters

In this chapter we investigate current and planned policy endeavours within the Dutch public broadcasting service pertaining to its search to identify quality and performance criteria that operationalise its distinctive (as compared with commercial counterparts) quality programming mission. These criteria go beyond quantitative audience measurement figures aimed at mere maximisation, which are better suited to commercial broadcasters.

Our analysis of this quest will be twofold. Policy measures assigned by the government as enacted in media legislation will be considered, as well as self-determined policy by the public broadcaster at the level of its three television channels, its twenty broadcasting organisations, and its concrete programme output. By assigned policy, we refer first and foremost to the visitation procedure that took place in 2003-2004 that was preceded by a self-reflective exercise carried out by the broadcasting organisations. When dealing with self-determined policy measures, a recently commissioned study by McKinsey (released in July 2003) posits eight dimensions of distinctive PSB quality programming; each dimension needs to be operationalised through several indicators. Next to three familiar indicators (i.e. quantitative dimensions: reach and share of total audience and target groups, cost efficiency and effectiveness) the other five dimensions and their respective indicators constitute the core parts of the so-called cultural commons of Dutch PSB. These merit specific attention. The Dutch public broadcaster's attempts to fulfil its public mission and to make it measurable through such instrumentation need continuing reflection and fine-tuning. Critical discussion is also provided.

European public television – in search of a mission

For the last fifteen years, national broadcasting policy has been eclipsed by European audiovisual policy. Let us begin with a review of the process and its dynamics.

In 1989 the well-known European Union Directive, *Television without Frontiers*, was implemented. At the same time the Council of Europe established the Convention for trans-border television. For EU member states this meant the mandatory character of the Directive consigned the non-binding Convention to the background. For that reason the Netherlands did not even bother to ratify the Convention after the Directive had been accepted even though it had played an important part in its preparation. Several elements marked a development in which the European Union, historically concerned mainly with economic matters, gradually began to also deal with cultural collaboration in Europe.

The Maastricht Treaty (1990) with its paragraph on culture was a first expression of this paradigmatic change. The tension between the economic principle of a free and open market and the cultural principle of promoting pluralism became more tangible in broadcasting policy. In fact, for the Netherlands (and elsewhere) it meant that a nationally and culturally oriented broadcasting policy had to make way for a more market-oriented European audio-visual policy. The hegemony of the public broadcasting system was replaced by a 'dual system' of public and commercial broadcasters. It was precisely through the foundation of the 'dual system' that the urgency for a definition of the role and legitimacy of public broadcasting, and its positioning with regard to commercial broadcasters, became vital concerns.

Consequently, from the nineties onwards the formulation of the task and mission of public broadcasting became the subject of focused attention. This need for more exact legitimisation encouraged a search for more precisely defined goals and performance indicators. Sources of inspiration were found in academic literature and political statements that had mushroomed over the years. Following this, we shall take a brief look at the way in which the concretisation of the mission and goals of public broadcasting, as well as attempts to concretise this even further in the form of new parameters for measuring performance and quality, took shape in the Dutch context.

Television Requires Responsibility was published in 1995. It assessed the ways in which television broadcasters in Europe, as well as in the United States, Canada and Australia, actually manage fulfilling their social responsibilities. This international comparative study carried out by communication scientists on the initiative of the Bertelsmann Foundation in association with the European Institute for the Media, indicates the growing level of interest in this subject.

Even earlier McQuail's book, *Media Performance*, whose importance here lies mainly in conceptualization, was published in 1992. According to McQuail's inventory (1992:49-64) the mission statements of public broadcasting invariably contain recurring ingredients: (1) a commitment to universal service; (2) diversity and representativeness of content in political, social and cultural terms; (3) democratic accountability; (4) significant elements of public financing; and (5) non-profit goals. Unsurprisingly, this further defining of the distinctive characteristics and tasks of public broadcasting first came in countries where public broadcasting had already lost its monopoly (Great

Britain, Canada) or where it had never existed (United States). The frequently cited advantage of the BBC in this field is therefore also due to the fact that it had to prove and justify itself in a dual broadcasting situation far sooner than its counterparts elsewhere in Europe.

Parallel to the growing interest in performance in relation to public broadcasting, the concept of quality with its orientation towards content and programmes was fortunately also the subject of increasing interest. John Corner (1995) outlined trends in a concept of quality that is closely associated with performance, indicating how it can be realised by public broadcasting. He stated that over time quality has come to refer to the notion of taste, and lack thereof (e.g., violence and sex, bad language). Quality also refers to ways of remedying this by uplifting peoples' spirits. Another school of thought views quality as a factor enhancing the audience's quality of life, from the paternalistic vision of giving people what they need to a purely mercantile view of giving people what they want. An eminently relative notion, quality is primarily assessed by the audience (since viewers can switch channels at any time) and it varies according to programme genres – which is not to say that the role of public service broadcasting is merely to supply those programmes wanted by the audience and to package them to taste.

Public service broadcasting must also be a driving force, one which creates space for the experimental and a quality of programming the entertainment industry is not inclined to offer. Such experiments should not be too unusual in order not to scare viewers away: public service broadcasting is at its best when it manages to 'push the envelope' while meeting well-targeted viewer expectations (see also d'Haenens, 2001). In connection with this, it is interesting to read the down-to-earth view of Peter Menneer (1996:16), former head of BBC Audience Research, who argues in favour of "coherent, clear and practical criteria on which public broadcasting can be judged. (...) Accountability and transparency are, and will remain, the order of the day." There are more than enough ideas on the mission of public broadcasting or, to recap Marc Raboy (1996:22): "there is no shortage of goodwill or good ideas."

In addition to academic contributions, there have been many attempts by the political sphere over the past decade to arrive at a common definition of public broadcasting. A clear example is the nine requirements or mandates for public service broadcasting formulated in the Declaration of Prague. This resolution, an agreement in principle without legally binding power but nonetheless carrying weight, was signed in 1994 by forty countries at the Fourth Council of Europe Ministerial Conference on Mass Media Policy. The core of this nine-point mission statement is based on article 10 of the European Human Rights Agreement: the right of every European citizen to share and receive information. To summarise, it is about:

- providing a reference point for all audience members as a factor for social cohesion;
- providing a forum for public discussion;

- broadcasting impartial and independent information;
- developing pluralistic, innovative, and varied high-quality programming;
- developing programmes for both broad audiences and minority groups;
- reflecting different ideas and beliefs, aimed at mutual understanding;
- contributing to a greater appreciation of the national and European cultural heritage;
- scheduling a significant proportion of original productions, especially fiction;
- offering a programme range which is complementary to that of commercial broadcasters (Council of Europe, 1994)

This resolution deals with four essential aspects of public broadcasting: (1) the responsibility to provide information; (2) political independence and a correlated sense of public accountability; (3) funding provision; and (4) access to new technology.

The main points of interest therefore are impartiality and pluralism in the editorial policy of public broadcasting, a reflection of the cultural heritage, a mirroring of the multi-ethnic society, and technological innovation. However, the concrete ways in which this principle agreement should be implemented fall to the authority of respective countries. The provision of funding and access to new technology are connected in the sense that government funding of broadcasting, including their online services, has been under heavy fire for some time. Claims from commercial broadcasters of unfair state support illustrate this.

In 2002, the ministers of the participating countries convened once more at the sixth European ministerial conference on mass media policy in Cracow¹ to decide on the extent to which agreements with regard to freedom of speech and information in the countries concerned were being upheld. In the light of growing media concentration, the control or monitoring of a multiform media supply and striving for suitable legislation play a key role here. The emphasis therefore lies on legislation, on limiting violent or pornographic content that could cause harm to vulnerable groups, and on so-called codes of conduct. The following four points were formulated as the central elements of the media policy: (1) the balance between freedom of expression and information, other rights and legitimate interests; (2) the pluralism of media services and content; (3) the promotion of social cohesion; (4) the modification of the legal framework for the media in light of current structural changes in the media sector.

In addition to tentative and therefore non-binding resolutions of the Council of Europe, we should focus special attention on the Protocol on the System of Public Broadcasting attached to the Amsterdam Treaty (1997). Here, public service broadcasting is regarded as a cornerstone of democracy. In this

Protocol attached to the European Treaty, member states of the European Union explicitly endorse the concept that public service broadcasting is directly related to the democratic, social and cultural needs of citizens and to the necessity of maintaining pluralism in the media. The protocol stipulates 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, 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). This compromise text between cultural and economic importance means the demand for a more detailed and concretised definition of public service broadcasting and the public interest has become even more essential.

In its Communication on the application of State aid rules to public service broadcasting (2001), the European Commission stipulates that the definition of the public service mandate should be as precise as possible. It should leave no doubt as to whether a certain activity performed by the entrusted operator is intended by the Member State to be included in the public service remit. The principle of subsidiarity means that the European Commission leaves it to the Member States to formulate the remit – however broadly – of public service broadcasting, while at the same time making it quite obvious that tasks must be as concrete as possible. Hence the importance of the submission of the Green Paper on services of general importance on 21st May 2003. In this document the service to the public, of enriching the public debate – not only by way of broadcasting but also through online information services on condition that they cater for democratic, social and cultural needs – is accepted as being part of the main terms of reference for public broadcasting.

In this continuously changing context, promoted largely by European policies, the Dutch government had to define and operationalise the mission and obligations of public service broadcasting more extensively and concretely than in the past.

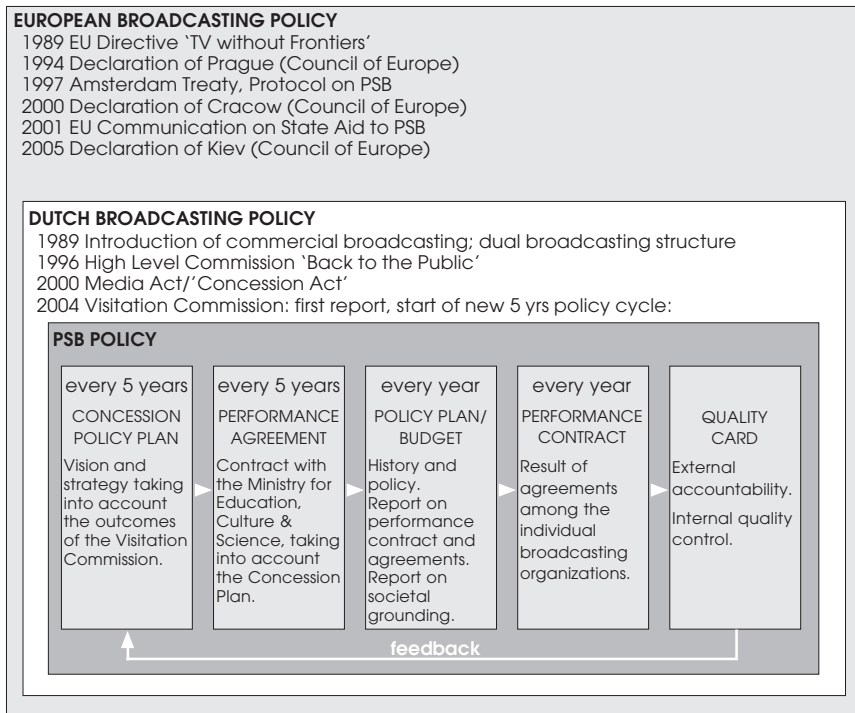
Reshaping Dutch public broadcasting

Although the Dutch public broadcasting system relies upon a fine tradition of civic involvement and participation, the present-day reality is that people are increasingly difficult to organise on the basis of active representation (Bardoel, 2001). At the same time the Dutch decentralised broadcasting system is good at organising representation and (external) diversity, but lags behind in providing the co-ordination and scale necessary to survive in a highly competitive context. Therefore after the introduction of a dual broad-

casting structure, the Dutch government had to restructure and 'reinvent' its broadcasting policy in the 1990s. Figure 1 provides an overview of recent Dutch PSB policy in response to the emerging European policy framework, placing the main new components of this policy – i.e., the visitation commission as an instrument of external accountability and the Quality Card as a tool for internal quality control – in the context of the new PSB policy cycle.

In a first response, commercial broadcasting via cable was legalised according to the European Directive, *Television without Frontiers*. Secondly, Dutch politics had to redefine its position *vis-à-vis* public broadcasting in the longer term. The government appointed a high level commission which advised in its report, *Back to the Public* (Commission Ververs, 1996), to renew the social embedding of broadcasting associations by introducing 'broadcasting elections' as a new mechanism to allocate broadcasting time. This proposal was widely criticised because rather than curing it was assumed to worsen the disease of increasing 'consumerism' or 'quasi-commercialisation' of the relationship between broadcasting associations and their respective memberships. The government did not follow this proposal for broadcast elections, but strongly supported the commissions' newly formulated rationale for a revitalised public broadcasting system, supported by a new, more centralised management structure, including a single concession for public broad-

Figure 1. Decision levels involved in PSB performance review and analysis



casting as a whole instead of many separate licenses for broadcasting associations. The new version of the Media Act that followed, nicknamed the Concession Act (2000), represents a “paradigm shift in the perspective of the government’s broadcasting policy. The main question is no longer that of who has the ‘right’ to broadcasting time based upon membership figures and representativeness. The main question now becomes what Dutch society can expect. A broadcasting corporation’s achieved and prospective accomplishments determine whether it will receive more broadcasting time” (Van der Haak, 2001:13).

The new act introduces a ‘double legitimacy’ (Bardoel & d’Haenens, 2004a) of public broadcasting: for separate broadcasting associations, and also for public broadcasting as a whole. The new ‘public accountability’ measures of public broadcasting as a whole can be subdivided into three categories:

1. *Accessible information* – through an *annual report*, with balance sheet and adjustments; an annual *booklet* for the general public (on paper and electronically); *newsletters* for target groups;
2. *Public dialogue* – through *meetings* with special interest and other organizations and target groups; the enabling of content-related *group visits*; a *television-mediator programme* on internal operations and public reactions; the use of the *Internet* for debates, publications and ‘meta-programmes’;
3. *Assessment of goals* – through a version of the *annual financial report* for the public; a *visitation commission* judging performance and making recommendations; through the *recognition* every five years of existing broadcasters and the *admission* of new broadcasters representing the essential improvement of the broadcasting system.

Some of these intentions are already being carried out (such as the annual programming report and the organisation of meetings with experts and target groups), while others have not yet begun (including the mediator programme). The visitation commission and periodic recognition, now statutory, have been implemented. In addition, individual broadcast associations must also demonstrate that their members “can influence policy in a verifiable and democratic manner” (NOS, 2000:11).

A new performance indicator – the Visitation Commission

The Concession Act (2000) obliges Dutch Public Broadcasting to organise an evaluation of the public broadcasters’ performance every five years. To this end, it must install an external assessment commission (‘visitation commission’) consisting of at least five independent experts that are ‘as far as

possible' representative of the viewing and listening audience. The commission is selected by the Public Broadcaster's Management Board and appointed by the Board of Governors after consultation with the minister responsible for media. The final report is to be presented to the Board of Governors, which eventually publishes it. The prime responsibility thus lies with the broadcasters themselves, not with the government.

The Commission must, according to the new Media Act, report on the performance of both national public broadcasting as a whole and of the separate broadcasting organisations. It must assess to what extent the programmes offered meet the 'interests and insights' of the general public and of specific social and age groups in Dutch society. Article 30 leaves it to the commission to formulate recommendations on the future goals or mission of national public broadcasting and the way they should be implemented. This periodic assessment procedure is meant to strengthen the legitimacy of public broadcasting. But it is also seen as an instrument to monitor whether existing broadcasting organisations still contribute to the 'dynamic plurality' of Dutch public broadcasting, and whether new social groupings have access to the open public broadcasting structure for which the Netherlands is famed. Consequently, the Minister of Culture uses the results of the assessment in the procedures for renewing the licence of individual broadcasting organisations every five years, as part of the ten-year licence period for public broadcasting as a whole. The minister can use these results to renew the 'recognition' of a broadcaster or not, or to change the conditions under which they would receive a new licence.

The first visitation commission, consisting of nine members, started its activities in January 2003 and reported on April 2, 2004. In its working procedures the commission closely followed the model that has proven to be practicable in higher education. Without legal requirement but in line with a long-standing practice in higher education, the Board of Governors of the Public Broadcaster decided that all broadcast organisations first ought to produce a so-called 'self-assessment' of about 50 pages in which these organisations separately report on and evaluate their performance in the current concession period in relation to the plans and promises made in their strategic policy documents. In an effort to make these self-assessments comprehensive and comparative between organisations, the Board of Governors designed a detailed 'assessment framework' touching upon the most relevant aspects of broadcasters' performance, relating to:

1. *the programme perspective*: i.e. mission and identity, performance, co-operation;
2. *the audience perspective*: i.e. reach, segmentation, distinctiveness, accountability;
3. *the organisation perspective*: i.e. organisational structure and culture, financial transparency and efficiency, innovation.

First experience indicates that broadcasters find this self-assessment useful albeit difficult. They are familiar with defining their mission and goals in mainly qualitative ways rather than in measurable criteria and language. That makes it hard to evaluate their performance in concrete and amenable terms. Since these self-assessments contain partly confidential information and organisations are invited to be self-critical, it was decided that these documents would not be made public.

The visitation commission started by reviewing the self-assessment documents of the twenty organisations and continued by interviewing the management staff of the respective broadcasting organisations. In the first phase, the commission assessed the performance of the individual broadcasting organisations that together comprise the system. In the second stage it looked at the performance of public broadcasting in total, assessing the extent to which this represents the 'dynamic pluralism' of (post)modern Dutch society. Altogether, 21 self-assessments (20 organisations and 1 for public broadcasting as a whole), and about a hundred interviews, constituted the basis of the commissions' assessment.

In its visitation report the commission concluded, on the one hand, that the individual broadcasting organisations have achieved a reasonable performance level and that it therefore cannot be said of any of the twenty broadcasting services that they – to use the carefully phrased words of the commission – no longer fit in with the Dutch public broadcasting system. At the same time, the commission has made some important comments about the way the system functions: the broadcasting companies fail when it comes to their shared responsibility for the functioning of the Dutch public broadcasting system as a whole. The way in which programme schedules for television and radio are made has 'become an inefficient, indecisive and therefore hardly professional procedure' (Visitation commission, 2004:112). Consequently, the share in public broadcasting time gradually diminishes and increasingly moves away from the target of forty percent. According to public broadcasting's own statistics, nine million viewers are on the point of turning their backs on public service broadcasting and are, generally speaking, only being retained by entertainment and sport programming. Important population groups such as the young, the less educated and ethnic minorities are not being sufficiently reached by the public broadcasting service.

According to the commission's analysis, the cause of the distressing situation in which the public broadcasting system now finds itself lies mainly in the managerial structure: 'The constellation of the existing system, aimed at organising and managing distinction has, in its present form, become a serious handicap' (Visitation Commission, 2004:113). There is too little focus on the viewer or the listener and too much on internal problems within the system. In the commission's view, the whole is less than the sum of its parts. For the short term the commission therefore advocates a number of measures, many of which can be realised within the existing legal framework. Should all these measures not result in an obvious improvement in perform-

ance – the commission refers to a last chance – more drastic measures will have to be taken in the long term. Although advocated by some political parties and programme-makers pressing for more decisiveness, the commission did not opt for a national broadcasting structure like the BBC, but rather to fit in with the specific Dutch broadcasting tradition. In the commission's model of the future, existing broadcasting organisations continue to be responsible for producing 'identity programmes', for which they are awarded a quarter to half the current number of programme hours. The remaining hours are filled by network and broadcasting managers within the agreed network or broadcasting profile, so that both the broadcasting organisations and independent producers have a role to play. In the commission's view, this open model will allow external plurality to develop in line with the dynamics of present-day society, while at the same time securing enough cohesion and professionalism.

The findings of the visitation commission attracted a great deal of media attention. In public broadcasting, where people had feared the worst, the main reaction was quite positive. The critical analysis made by the commission received general support. The recommendations were criticised by some politically appointed governors, but supported by middle management and professionals. In the political world, too, there was support for the critical analysis and the sense of urgency, although each party's response differed according to its background interests. The Minister responsible for the media has adopted most of the commission's proposals for the short term, and started a procedure to prepare a vision on the future structure of public broadcasting. That is due before summer 2005.

Evaluation of the Visitation Commission

Drawing on the experience in higher education, from two earlier, self-organised pilots with the new system and the first official visitation procedure in Dutch public broadcasting – one of the co-authors was a member of these pilot commissions and of the recent first official commission – one can conclude that this assessment procedure has the potential to become a valuable instrument for both external accountability and internal quality control. The independence of the commission can give its assessments high credibility and this mechanism may therefore help to 'depoliticise' the relationship between politics and public broadcasting. Public broadcasters for their part take the procedure seriously because they know their reputation and their 'recognition' as public broadcaster in terms of the Media Act may depend on it. Like similar assessments in higher education, the publication of the assessment of the commission, which had shown a certain degree of mildness in deference to being the first time, attracted a lot of public and press attention. At the same time the analogy with higher education teaches us that these assessments are first and foremost meant as an incentive to stimu-

late organisations to critically reflect on past performance in order to improve future performance. It's not about terminating their existence, although this conceivably would be the ultimate step.

Critical notes

All in all, the assessment committee has the potential to become a valuable new policy tool, but there are also considerable risks involved. The main risks are politicisation, bureaucratisation and ritualisation (Bardoel, 2003). In some countries or cultures, public broadcasting is politicised to such an extent that an independent assessment is probably illusory (of course the same holds true for the very concept of independent public broadcasting as such). Moreover, a political system that continually comes up with new policy measures while the commission is still at work puts pressure on its independence. The commission is then dealing most of the time with a moving target. Two subsequent Dutch government coalitions in the space of a year, and criticism of its performance in dealing with the murder of the populist politician Fortuyn, have recently resulted in serious budget cuts for the Dutch public broadcasting service. It would have been preferable for the government to wait with important policy changes or financial restrictions until the end of a concession or licensing period. This might have allowed broadcasters to perform better according to their promises, and it certainly would have allowed politics to act less haphazardly. From a Flemish study into the working of management agreements, (Boukaert et al., 1999) it is clear that performance contracts work better when those who are politically responsible respect the autonomy of the contractor during the contract period and do not interfere with their finances. However, this does not exclude the possibility of periodic adjustments during the contract due to changing circumstances.

As to bureaucratisation, the assessment (or self-assessment) procedure involves a lot of paper work that might become a system and end in itself. Moreover, it might become an additional system of control for (internal) managers and (external) supervisors that would straitjacket professional and creative people. Arguably, however, professional broadcasters rather too easily think any accountability mechanism threatens independence, quality and creativity. Traditionally, media professionals are primarily oriented towards their product and their peers and much less towards the public and their role in and for society. Therefore, a feasible middle ground has to be found between freedom and responsibility for public broadcasting services.

Ritualisation is a risk in the same vein. Public accountability in general, and this assessment procedure in particular, may become another element in the permanent rhetorical and paper discourse between public broadcasting organisations and their political supervisors. In this discursive struggle it is never quite clear to what extent the paper reality relates to the practical reality.

Finally, in this context it is important that the assessment procedure remains, as was originally intended, a mechanism for public accountability and by no means an instrument for political accountability. The specific mechanism was initially proposed by public broadcasting services themselves in an effort to establish a new and closer relationship to citizens and civil society, as well as to gain independence from both the political system and commercial pressures. By putting this proposal into law, its status was certainly strengthened. But at the same time the risk of being 'colonised' by the political system becomes more serious. At the same time, the mere fact that the commission was initially installed by, and will finally report to, the Board of Governors of the public broadcasting service means that it still is an instrument of self-regulation and of public accountability after all.

Next we examine how the Dutch public broadcasting service comes to terms with the excavated policy dilemmas and how they translate the obligation of external accountability (i.e. imposed by the legislator) into a workable instrument for internal quality control. We thus turn from a view from the outside to a look inside.

From external accountability to internal quality control

Over the last year, intensive work has been done in the Netherlands on the development and implementation of a system to measure the quality of the public broadcasting service. The Dutch public broadcasting service is not alone in this. Other broadcasters actively involved with quality indices and quality standards including the BBC, Belgium's VRT and Austrian ORF, served as sources of inspiration. The consultancy firm, McKinsey & Company (2003), played an important role in the materialisation of the new quality system. Ideas and plans that had been present within the Dutch public broadcasting service and had been legitimised by McKinsey were accepted into the organisation more readily. Eight indicators have been identified in a so-called spider web model. This gives structure to the distinctiveness, or the distinguishing features, of the public broadcaster. This model is known as the 'Quality Card.' The public broadcaster's research department plays a central role in the development and interpretation of the Quality Card. Moreover, the finance department will start work on making it easier to measure cost efficiency and effectiveness. This entails a thorough re-orientation: the aim is to do more goal- and result-oriented research underlining policy, and the preparation thereof.

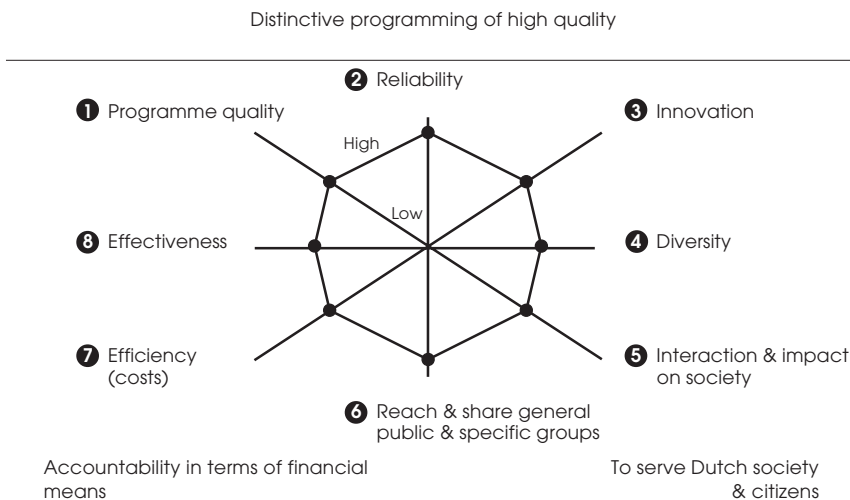
The Quality Card

The Quality Card has two functions. On the one hand it is an aid for internal quality improvement. This amounts to an internal quality control even if imposed externally by the legislative body. Thus and on the other hand, it is also an instrument for external accountability. The results could be used as building blocks for the next round of visitation. The most important function of the Quality Card, which is still being developed, is to provide insight into how the public broadcasting service works as a whole and per component (channels, broadcasting services, programmes, sites) on the basis of comparable criteria. The Quality Card and its performance dimensions become part of the process of policymaking and policy evaluation within the Dutch public broadcasting service. The aim is to test the public broadcasting service's performances continually on three platforms (radio, television, the Internet) and to report its functioning on the basis of the Quality Card (twice a year internally and once a year externally).

Although the criteria for the various levels are comparable, separate Quality Cards will be developed per medium. There are also plans to accentuate certain aspects per channel or per programme, wherever necessary (including the Internet, where sites are ordered per theme or per site).

On the Quality Card, there are three main topics – based on the above-mentioned mission of public broadcasting. These are categories within which the performance dimensions can be placed: (1) Distinctive programming of high quality (programme quality, reliability, innovation); (2) To serve Dutch society and its citizens (diversity, interaction and impact, reach and share); (3) Accountability in terms of financial means (efficiency, effectiveness). As the development of relevant indicators for cost efficiency and effectiveness

Figure 2. Quality card, 8 performance dimensions



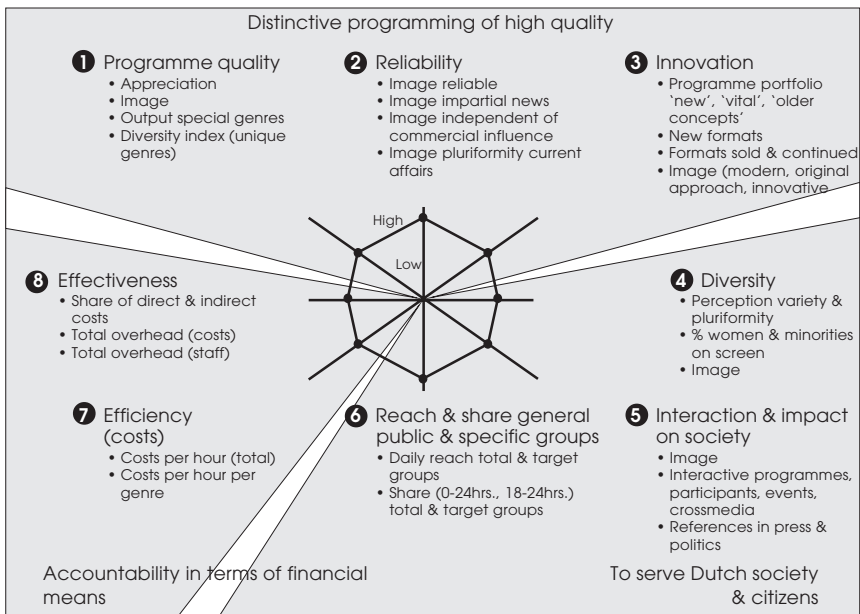
does not belong to the field of audience research but rather on the finance department, requiring higher co-operation between disciplines within the organisation, the remaining six performance dimensions will be discussed in greater detail here.

Performance dimensions and indicators

Each performance dimension consists of several indicators that translate specific target values into quantifiable performance. After validation, the performance dimensions and indicators are to be evaluated: in other words, the latter entails the real use of the Quality Card.

The *programme quality* performance dimension is given a lot of weight. It consists of a variety of indicators that assess the quality of the programme supply from different angles. Some Dutch broadcasting organisations have indicated that they only regard functional quality as being important, while others think this approach is too one-sided and instead advocate the introduction of indicators providing insight into the so-called 'professional' or 'traditional' quality of what is on offer. Professional criteria are also being listed for the Internet, referring to content, navigation and user-friendliness. So-called values have been formulated for every television network that links up with the network profile. A first impulse has been devoted to the development of functional quality characteristics. That will be expanded with indicators for professional quality and an assessment on the quality of the content.

Figure 3. Quality card, performance dimensions and indicators



Using a set of image characteristics, the *reliability* and independence of the public broadcasting service is measured in terms of the public's perception. A similar assessment takes place at the programme level, particularly regarding news and current affairs programmes. Furthermore, there is a set of characteristics providing insight into the image the public has of the way in which the public broadcasting service *innovates* and develops itself, as a whole. Apart from public image it is also important to have an insider's opinion about the actual output. An indicator is currently being developed which will give insight into the extent to which programming is being 'maintained' (such as by the renewal of titles, modernisation and development within programmes) on the one hand, and the degree to which the public broadcasting service has been innovative on the other.

Moving to the second performance dimension, how is service to Dutch society and citizens to be assessed? The McKinsey report (2003) made a start on the development of indicators providing insight into the degree of *diversity* in public broadcasting service. Here, too, the first step was to establish what image the public had in mind. In order to decide whether the output is indeed pluralistic, an indicator is being developed to determine external diversity (for example, is a theme covered by more than one channel?). Another indicator will determine whether a different approach has been chosen with regard to content (choice of subject, versatility of viewpoints, approach, etc.).

Social interaction and impact on the public can be determined in many ways. Here the image and the reactions of the public are considered important. Furthermore, there is a check on how often other media refer to the content of the programmes of the public broadcasting service. Apart from that, indicators have been developed to assess public participation in the broadcaster's activities (taking part in interactive programmes, attendance of events, etc.). There is a lot of available information, but procedures still need to be developed to collate the channels' relevant information efficiently.

In terms of *reach and share of the general public and specific groups*, the public broadcasting service has three research instruments at its disposal to provide continual insight into the viewing, listening and surfing habits of the Dutch public as a whole, and of various sections of it. For radio and television the methods and indicators used have been standardised and accepted by all parties – public and commercial broadcasters. Here target values need to be established per medium concerning reach and certain relevant public segments. New indicators are being developed for the Internet.

Research instruments

In determining the indicators, measurability has been taken into account as well as the factual data availability and research instruments to produce data. Consequently, the Quality Card is first and foremost a means to order exist-

ing information and to make it meaningful. Moreover, it can provide inspiration for obtaining new information from existing data and research ('data mining'). Where necessary, existing research will be modified or extended and new research will be implemented, especially for the performance dimensions called innovation, diversity, and interaction and impact. We will now examine concrete examples demonstrating how existing research instruments will be modified or used differently in the context of the Quality Card, or how new instruments are being developed.

Continuous measurement of media use is an existing research instrument used mainly for determining audience share and reach, but which can also be used in a broader sense for other dimensions. In fact not only do the media use measurement systems to register viewing-, listening- and surfing habits, they also collect extensive information on the actual media output. The data from media use measurement are to be analysed in new ways in the context of the Quality Card. An illustration of this is the *diversity index*, indicating the level of diversity per program type. On the level of the whole programme output, the public broadcasting service aims to make programmes where men and women, indigenous citizens and ethnic minorities, old and young, those who are in good health and the sick, as well as people whose pronunciation of the Dutch language is different (Standard Dutch, dialects, the Surinam accent, etc.) are proportionally represented. Through content analysis of the public broadcasting service's programmes and – by way of comparison – of commercial networks, the *diversity monitor* was a check in 2002 to investigate the extent to which the public broadcasting service had achieved these aims. This study, which is to be carried out every five years, determined the characteristics of individual persons/characters who had, for example, played different roles in these programmes.

The daily *audience appreciation measurement* by means of the people-meter until the end of 2001, was separated from the television audience measurement in 2002. According to a number of previously developed functional quality characteristics, a panel of 8,000 people, who are approached via the Internet, judge the PSB programmes broadcast the previous evening and – by way of comparison – those of the commercial networks. This new way of surveying plays an important part in measuring the performance dimensions called programme quality, innovation, interaction and impact.

Periodic *image and evaluation surveys* are conducted for the different platforms and parts of the public broadcasting service, and are particularly important for the performance dimensions called innovation, diversity, interaction and impact. This type of survey – besides being cheaper than before due to the changeover from separate sample surveys to panels and the replacement of CATI (computer-aided telephone interviews) by online-data collecting – profits from the structure of the Quality Card: the different surveys can be done more purposefully and with better co-ordination.

The image barometer for the public broadcasting service as a whole is new. It checks the social base for the public broadcasting service, its image,

the impact on the public debate, etc. Through the *lifestyle survey*, the Dutch population is divided into eight groups (social categories) that distinguish themselves among others in standards and values, social-cultural involvement and interests. The lifestyle survey is of great importance in measuring the performance dimension called interaction and impact. A few years ago a separate survey achieved a division into groups relevant to the public broadcasting service. By making this survey structural, it will be possible to follow trends to clarify whether and when updating segmentation characteristics and the subdivision into groups will be necessary. The division into lifestyle groups has been incorporated into several surveys, including the television audience measurement: once a year the television panel is given a set of questions to answer. After the analysis of the data and the construction of lifestyle groups, the panel members' data are linked to the daily stream of information from the television audience measurement. This categorisation is also used in other research, including the audience appreciation measurement and a part of the image surveys, thus providing the public broadcasting service with detailed information on concrete performances in different lifestyle groups. Once the Quality Card has more or less acquired its definitive form and function, the possibility of *expert panels* who will be evaluating specific programme genres and types will be examined.

Critical evaluation of the Quality Card

With the development and organisation of the Quality Card an important step is being taken in the professionalisation of policy-making in the public broadcasting service, by way of evaluating the performance of the public broadcasting service and its components on the basis of fixed and comparable criteria. It is interesting to compare the typology of indicators with other European initiatives. In addition to criteria such as efficiency and appropriateness, which originated with McKinsey and in documents on quality, reliability and reach that are accepted in Europe, attention to diversity, innovation and interaction with the public originated within the Dutch public broadcasting service and therefore feature less prominently in other European contexts. It is clear that in the elaboration of the Quality Card choices must be made and certain points are accentuated. The quality project clearly shares interfaces with a variety of fields related to media policy, projects and activities within the public broadcasting service: public accountability, marketing, concession policy plan, organisational innovation, internal communication, efficiency operations, projects of technological innovation, programme policy, covenants, performance contracts, etc. If the Quality Card were to be separated from all this, the project would be of little value with corresponding low motivation for anyone in the organisation to be willing to fill it in.

Obviously the Quality Card is the result of policy itself. Characteristic for the still budding concrete plans is the lack of a framework within which

priorities are set and goals are formulated. It is here that choices need to be made: for example, is it still realistic and desirable to continue to presume that all groups need to be reached by the public broadcasting service? Priorities also need to be set – by giving weight to dimensions and indicators. How far should innovation or better quality be sacrificed to audience reach? The Quality Card must not become a menu from which any programme-maker or any network may simply choose a favourite criterion at will. At the same time one must keep in mind that the policy itself will be measured as well, and this supposes a certain neutrality. As the Quality Card will acquire an increasingly central position in the policy process, the quality of the measurement of quality itself could come under pressure, for instance by the attempts of those concerned to use the Quality Card at will (to the benefit of certain criteria at the expense of others). In other words, when the quality project is set up, care must be taken that it does not enable people to sit in their webs like spiders interfering wherever they can. If people establish every possible relationship with the above-mentioned fields of policy and take every possible application of the Quality Card into consideration, the project will be ruined by its own pretensions. When choosing indicators the emphasis will be on information and the available research instruments. It would show little pragmatism to develop a completely new research instrument. Historically, the emphasis has been on traditional audience research, a specialty of the research department of old – which is far from sufficient today.

The assessment of quality should be simple in order to provide insight into the essence, but it should also do justice to complexity and variety. Filling in the Quality Card takes effort and might even cause unwanted side effects in programme-makers: for example red tape distracts from 'core business' and cripples creativity. Moreover, assessments that are too comprehensive cannot be communicated. The Quality Card needs to be used as a means of communication with which complex performances are reduced to the bare essentials to be able to adapt internally and to gain legitimacy externally. On this basis it is logical to choose those aspects of quality that can be quantified and objectified and which have, moreover, at least in part already been measured in practice without oversimplifying matters.

Quality assessment can relate to conditions, to the products themselves, to direct effects (e.g. appreciation by viewers) or to further effects of the programmes (e.g. the social function). Generally speaking, the current Quality Card can be said to be rather arbitrary regarding which of the four levels of quality is measured. Why are *innovation* and *diversity* assessed on the basis of the present output, and *reliability* solely on the basis of the image? Apart from public perception, actual reliability is naturally also of importance. Although pure process assessments are not very useful because certain processes do not always automatically lead to the expected results, a pure product assessment falls short too. Moreover, certain qualitative aspects are difficult to measure. One might wonder whether it would not be better to assess an aspect such as *innovation*, at least in part, according to the production process.

Discussion and conclusions

In this chapter we have worked to determine how the European policy framework outlined in the first part, in which the European Union makes ever more far-reaching demands regarding the precise definition of the public broadcasting service's tasks and where the Council of Europe also acts as a forum for its interpretation – leads national governments and national public broadcasting services to make even greater efforts to define their concrete missions and performances. Our chapter shows how the Dutch public broadcasting service has recently attempted to interpret this relatively new policy direction.

Initially, from the second half of the 1990s, this justification policy was very much based on the example of the BBC. It appears that this policy has to a certain extent been put into practice and the legislator has even adopted some of the proposed measures in the new 2000 Media Act. The most striking example of this is the periodic assessment of the public broadcasting service by means of a visitation procedure.

The visitation, which has now been implemented by the legislator, has become a prominent part of the recent accountability policy. This example of external accountability towards politics and society is now to have an internal extension in the form of the 'Quality Card', currently in development. Plans to this end have been in existence for a long time, but recent recommendations by McKinsey, which mainly concern improving cost efficiency and the possibilities for cutbacks, accelerated the development of commonly supported, integral quality planning and assessment instrumentation. Moreover, the most recent report by the first visitation committee labels a broadcast-wide view of quality as being a top priority.

In view of the visitation procedure, our initial and quick evaluation is that in principle it is a meaningful instrument for external accountability. Initially a component of a policy of public accountability put forward by the public broadcasting service, it has now been transformed by the legislator into an important instrument of political accountability. This legal status has both strengthened and weakened the position of the instrument. It has become stronger because it now has a formal and therefore less voluntary character. But also weakened because part of the broadcasting service, and particularly the professionals, see it as a merely political instrument. In this way a new instrument for more horizontal public accountability has changed into a vertical, political instrument. The potential politicising of this instrument also contributes to the possibility ordered by law – and implemented by the first commission – to make a recommendation regarding the future structure of the public broadcasting service. Once again we see the same paradox: it makes the instrument more powerful, but also more of a component in a political battle. However, it is much too early to reach firm conclusions.

The Quality Card can also be described in principle as a meaningful new instrument that makes the public broadcasting service less dependent on current operational performance parameters that conform to the market. This

approach yields measurements that are more sophisticated and integral to PSB. The threats facing the Quality Card are similar to those regarding visitation: politicisation, bureaucratisation and ritualisation. The term politicisation refers mainly to internal broadcasting policies. In the proposed form, it will be used by the central management of the public broadcasting service for both external accountability (including the periodic visitation) and for internal control and adjustments.

The measurement and evaluation of the various performance dimensions demand both great effort at a central level, and from individual broadcasters. Because of the high level of tension between the whole and the parts within the Dutch public broadcasting service, the Quality Card – which is mainly being developed by the central research department – will be perceived as a new instrument of control and this may greatly hamper acceptance by all departments. A contributing factor is the fact that the goals based on the ‘spider web’ do not enjoy consensus in all networks.

The proposed verifiable criteria based (as much as possible) on existing and (then also) new research have the advantage of being concrete and based on hard data, but can also have a static and rigid effect with too little eye for the processing side of qualitative policy. Here too, as regarding the evaluation of the visitation procedures, it is still too early to reach firm, detailed conclusions. The concrete result is still in development and the final terms are still too vague. How will the instrument develop: purely as a new means of research, as PR-window dressing, as a management tool and/or as a useful instrument for programme policy and practice? In the well-known logic of bureaucracy, the policy of accountability yields new research instruments entrusted to the research department, new communication strategies entrusted to communication department accountability, and isolated projects entrusted to project managers. All these components should, in the end, contain a good, integral policy of accountability and, altogether, remain flexible and versatile.

Defining distinctiveness is hard and demanding work. Measuring distinctiveness should be broadly considered as meeting and balancing the demands on the organisation made by key interest groups such as the public (general audience and particular groups), the government (Dutch and EU), and its own employees. The Dutch public broadcasting service, a midsize organisation with three TV channels and five radio stations, is itself complex. It is required to serve many conflicting aims at once. While it should act as a unifying creative force, it is also supposed to meet the needs of diverse audience groups, as well as complement and compete with commercial schedules. At the same time, it houses twenty different broadcasting organisations with diverging and not infrequently incongruous views on programme output and strategy. Given this complexity, and after a period of development and fine-tuning of the Quality Card and the plethora of research instruments linked to it, the path of non-commitment should be abandoned. Instead priorities must be given and weight attributed to achievement dimensions and indicators, depending on whether they are intended to meas-

ure single programmes, programme genres, broadcasting organisations, channels or the entire public broadcasting system.

Note

1. For further information see http://www.epceurope.org/statements/Krakow_declaration.shtml

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Fine-tuned or Out-of-key?

Critical Reflections on Frameworks for Assessing PSB Performance

Tomas Coppens

At no point in its 80-year history has the concept of Public Service Broadcasting [PSB] been unchallenged. Some critical remarks have evolved over time, others have remained the same. PSB has been accused of paternalism and, thus, of not reflecting contemporary society in an entirely accurate way. Recently commercialism became a target for critique that – in a way – claims that PSB is now reflecting our contemporary, market-driven society perhaps too well. Remarks about perceived right-wing or left-wing bias have been constant from the BBC's attitude towards the 1926 General Strike to the Spanish TVE's coverage of the March 11th 2004 events.

Despite the plethora of critical remarks and the subsequent reforms of the broadcasting landscape as a whole (in the 1980s) and of the various public broadcasting corporations in particular (in the 1990s), PSB has proven to be remarkably resilient. It is still a major force in European broadcasting. In many countries PSB is leading in the ratings or, at least, finishing a close second. Despite predictions of the decline and fall of PSB, public broadcasters are as vibrant as ever throughout Europe, even though the concept of PSB and the way it is implemented have changed over time. In modern times, for example, public broadcasters have been forced to create ways to reconcile their traditional political and cultural remits with a business-minded approach in order to survive the transition from what was once a mostly cultural activity to what is now primarily seen as an industrial activity.

In recent years, a new wave of 'attacks' and reforms hammer most European public broadcasters as the private broadcasting lobby and the European Union have become increasingly active in the domain of national and international media policy. As a result, new accountability frameworks have been created in several European countries. Basically, public broadcasters are asked to perform a series of specific tasks, defined in periodical service contracts between broadcasters and governments. The new mechanisms for assessing PSB performance are put into place to make sure these broadcasters perform those tasks. This latest phase in PSB policy, consisting of these three basic elements, service contracts, performance indicators and performance analy-

sis, is the focus of this chapter. The main question is how the culture versus commerce tension is being dealt with in this new governance schema. Focussing on the case of Belgium and drawing on other European cases, the chapter aims to show the strengths and weaknesses of such policy contributes in terms of solving the cultural dilemmas that weaken the broader PSB-remit.

Elements of PSB critique

Before focussing on the new policy framework, a concise overview of PSB-critique is necessary to excavate the underlying current. In the last decade two major forces came to the fore in scrutinising PSB: the private broadcasting lobby and the European Union regulations.

Private broadcasters have outnumbered public broadcasters since 1989 and have been using their increasing power to actively challenge the scope and funding of public broadcasting at both national and international levels. In Flanders (Belgium), for example, the amount of commercial funding (and therefore the general level of funding as well) for the public broadcasting corporation, VRT, has been limited as a result of political lobbying by the major private broadcasting company. In Ireland, private broadcasters were very active in participating in the 2002 Forum on Broadcasting, a committee of experts appointed by the Irish government to advise on the future of broadcasting policy. Although many of their remarks weren't incorporated in the Forum's conclusions, they did succeed in reserving a part of RTÉ's licence fee increase for a fund to "innovative public service type broadcasting" that is open to all broadcasters (Department for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, 2002: 6).

The Irish Forum on Broadcasting offers a particularly good example of how public and private broadcasters use the same terms in an embattled discourse. Both emphasise values such as quality and diversity, yet each makes use of these terms in very different senses to reach contrary conclusions. While public broadcasters struggle to define 'quality', commercial competitors take the easy route and say quality is simply whatever the audience likes. In the same way, the value of diversity challenges public broadcasters as an incitement to serve everyone with (almost) everything, while for private broadcasters diversity is truncated to the 'natural result' of competition and consumer choice. It is not an objective or mandate for any specific broadcaster.

The discourse on public service broadcasting elaborated by the private sector often follows a particular, self-serving pattern. This was laid out in the contribution of the Independent Broadcasters of Ireland to the Forum (Buttle, 2002): PSB should be defined in terms of programmes and not in terms of an overall remit or institutional values. In essence, PSB should be defined as 'unprofitable' programming, thereby limiting the scope of PSB and

excluding programme types such as imported fiction, sports or light entertainment. Public broadcasters should not air these programme types. According to that same line of reasoning, the government should not fund public service broadcasters but rather public service programming, regardless of the channel or network that carries such programming. This argument limits the scope and the competitive strength of public broadcasters and creates an opening for private broadcasters to receive public funding, should they decide to air a bit of public service programming. Such arguments are also applied at the European level. The success of private broadcasters' rhetorical impact on the national level is still rather limited if noticeable. At the EU-level they seem to find more support for their case.

Public service broadcasting did not preoccupy the Union until 1992-1993 when private broadcasters from France, Spain and Portugal began filing complaints with the European Commission about the 'state aid' public broadcasters received, claiming a consequent distortion of market competition (for an overview of the complaints, see Márton, 2001). To address those claims, the Competition Directorate General ordered a study on the question of whether it is possible to fairly attribute a fixed sum of money to fund a certain service. How much money do public broadcasters really need to fulfil their duties? The result was predictable: the question could not be answered. The PSB-remit is intangible and normative. It is embedded in the idea of participatory democracy. Pluralism, citizenship, creativity and national culture are difficult ideas (and ideals) to calculate with a price tag. What is the retail price for a healthy public sphere these days? Is there citizenship inflation or a pluralistic deficit?

The debacle of this attempt to put a price on PSB did not, however, alleviate the Commission of its need to rule in the aforementioned cases. Confronted with the unexpected complexity of the issue, the Commission dodged by ruling only in the Portuguese case. That ruling favoured the public broadcaster RTP: public funding was justified because RTP was performing public service tasks. But the issue was not resolved and so it landed on the Commission's agenda again in 1997-98. The reasons for renewed attention to PSB were (Levy, 1999): a new series of complaints against the latest, digital activities of the BBC (United Kingdom), ARD and ZDF (Germany) and RAI (Italy), a slap on the fingers by the European Court of Justice for not ruling in most of the 1992-1993 cases, and some confusion over the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam Protocol on PSB.

This Protocol establishes the special importance of PSB in European society by acknowledging its social and cultural values, along with its positive contribution to democracy and pluralism. This is accepted as justification for public funding. In the short term, the Protocol was a victory for public broadcasters. In the build-up to the Protocol, private broadcasters had insisted on a narrower definition of public service broadcasting. Again following their line of reasoning, for private broadcasters PSB was about offering content that was not profitable enough for commercial operators to programme, e.g.,

live opera screenings and Open University programmes. It was about things that did not require the level of public funding PSB broadcasters received. Or, if the broader notion of PSB as a range of diverse programme genres was accepted, it should be acknowledged that private broadcasters also offer a public service and are therefore entitled to a slice of the public funding cake. In either case public broadcasters would face an existential crisis and, more importantly, would be hit hard where it hurts the most – secure funding. Focussing on PSB's weak spot, this culture versus commerce dilemma, private broadcasters created a handy diversion for the real target of their actions. If accepted, the private broadcasters' line of reasoning inherently means more money for them and less money for their PSB competitors: clearly a win-win situation if ever there was one.

They were to be disappointed because the Amsterdam Protocol was kind to public broadcasters in opting for a definition of PSB "as the activity of a public service broadcaster – not as a generic activity which was common to publicly and privately owned broadcasters and which should get a subsidy from public funds regardless of its point of origin" (Horgan, 2001:183-184). But as McChesney (1999:84) rightly pointed out, "a generation earlier such a protocol would have been considered not just unnecessary but absurd". The authority of the Union over matters related to public service broadcasting was now established. This could prove to be a long-term problem because the "dominant official European Community ethos is hostile to public enterprise" (Collins, 1998:55). The Protocol also became a typical example of how different sections of the Union come to different conclusions using the same text.

In an attempt to create a more workable and common definition of what public service broadcasting is, the ever helpful Competition DG quickly made a draft document defining PSB in terms of programme genres, limiting the use of public funds to those genres labelled as PSB. Of course so-called "PSB genres" did not include sports, entertainment or movies. Even the Competition Commissioner at that time, Karel Van Miert, thought his DG had overstepped by creating such a document. He preferred a case-by-case approach (Levy, 1999). The Member States were equally dissatisfied with the document. It was consequently consigned to the dustbin, at least for the time being.

But the confusion in the Union's position on what PSB is continued to percolate. The Irish Forum on Broadcasting gave air to its confusion by stating (2002:10): "Some instruments reflect the Commission's ethos of encouraging competition, others emphasise the cultural and social aspects of various European identities and the need to have these protected from raw market forces". For its part, the European Commission had issued a statement on the funding of public service broadcasting in November 2001 that acknowledged the importance of broadcasting. "There is no other service that at the same time has access to such a wide sector of the population, provides it with so much information and content, and by doing so conveys and influences both individual and public opinion" (European Commission, 2001:5).

The social, political and cultural value of public service broadcasting is particularly emphasised.

The Union's policy towards public service broadcasting illustrates painfully the main dilemma: broadcasting is *both* a cultural and an industrial activity. Although the EU, spurred on by private broadcasters, tends to criticise mixing the traditional PSB-remit with a commercial approach, it does little to fix the problem. The European Union claims that as a cultural institution PSB should play according to free market rules. And yet when that is exactly what PSB tries to do, e.g. by generating additional commercial income while still maintaining a high quality and diverse service, it becomes a pincushion for more law suits and directives. It feels like somewhere along the way some have decided that public broadcasters must shoulder all the downsides of the free market while declining any of its perks. The very idea of 'fair competition' can be seen here in a quite unsavoury light. If PSB is seen as something beyond the free market, then why insist that it follow free market rules?

In general, the Commission continued, there are cases where public funding is allowed. Namely when three conditions are met: 1) the tasks of the funded service are clearly defined, 2) the recipient of the funding is officially assigned to carry out the defined tasks, and 3) fair competition is not distorted. The third condition poses particular problems for public service broadcasting because the Commission states that public funding does distort fair competition in the broadcasting market. The arguments made by private broadcasters about how public broadcasters use public funds to outbid them for broadcasting rights and to snatch away advertisers by offering better deals were thus partly upheld by the Commission. But in light of the special nature of PSB, returning to the substance per se, public funding is indeed acceptable on three conditions:

1. The Member States must be clear on what the tasks of its PSB-system are. Only then can the Commission judge whether public funding is justified. Defining the task of PSB is left to the national authorities, provided it fits the broad remit as described in the Amsterdam Protocol, i.e. serving the democratic, social and cultural needs of a society. The national authorities are also allowed not to restrict the PSB-remit to 'traditional' outlets such as radio and television, thus allowing these broadcasters to move into new territory such as the Internet.
2. A broadcasting company must formally – by law or licence agreement – be charged with carrying out the defined tasks. The Commission recommends setting up regulatory authorities charged with establishing the broadcaster's compliance. The Commission explicitly states that it is not competent to judge whether a national broadcaster is indeed fulfilling its nationally determined tasks.
3. The national authorities are free to determine the funding mechanism for their public broadcaster – purely public or mixed funding – but a

clear division must be made between a broadcaster's public and commercial activities and it must also be made clear which activity is funded by what source of funding. The level of funding is, again, up to the Member States to decide, although the Commission promises to intervene if that level would exceed what is required for fulfilling the clearly defined tasks.

Has this finally cleared up the matter? Hardly. As soon as the text was published commentators disagreed. According to Ward (2001) the Commission is safeguarding the broad mission and ample funding for public service broadcasting. Hujanen and Lowe (2003:15) think differently, seeing this text as another step in a general direction to marginalise public service broadcasting: "Private ownership of the public interest is already well down the road towards being naturalized". The proof of the pudding is in the eating and there's no telling yet what the long-term effects of the Commission's stance on the future of public service broadcasting will be. But for those who cherish PSB, concerns are justified. The Commission has again left a margin for interpretation, and although the spirit of the text does indeed seem supportive of PSB, things can quickly change.

Public broadcasters' allies are largely found in the Member States (i.e., owners) and in the European Parliament (i.e., representatives of the European audience). Allies are not in the Commission, and most certainly not in the Competition Directorate General (guardian of 'fair' competition) that, with this text, established its own authority over PSB-matters as never before. Cultural rationales prevail for the present time in this particular arena of EU broadcasting policy, but economic rationales have more than a foot in the door.

Three elements of the new performance-driven PSB-policy

Against this background of PSB-critique, several authorities have implemented new PSB policy frameworks oriented to meeting the EU's wishes – at least partly – while balancing respective national concerns. In general, the new PSB-policy framework has 3 elements that have been (all three or some of them) introduced in many EU countries in the past decade:

- In several countries **service contracts** have been signed between the broadcaster and its shareholders for a limited period of time that state what the PSB-objectives are. A service contract is an agreement for a limited period (usually 3 to 5 years) between a PSB broadcaster and a government in which the broadcaster is asked to meet certain performance goals specified by so-called performance indicators. A service contract should be seen as a specification of the general legal frame-

work of the public broadcasting institution and not, as is the case with the BBC's Royal Charter, as the legal framework itself.

- These **performance indicators** [PI] form the second element of the new PSB-policy trends. Although all service contracts contain some performance indicators, the PI's can also be found in other documents, drafted by the broadcasters themselves, such as yearly statements of commitments or promises. Performance indicators are quantitative or qualitative targets the broadcaster must meet within a fixed time, either each year or over the duration of the contract or licence.
- Lastly, the public broadcasters faced new accountability mechanisms scrutinising their performance and, in some cases, attaching PSB-performance with financial consequences. The idea of **performance analysis** is now embedded in the new framework, although the variety of schemas to assess PSB's performance is high.

Belgium offers an interesting case to study the nature and consequences of this new PSB-policy framework. Not only have Belgian public broadcasters, the Dutch-speaking VRT and the French-speaking RTBF, been operating under a service contract since 1997, but because media policy is here the competence of regional authorities Belgium also provides two quite different cases within one country.

The general framework of PSB in both linguistic communities is similar: in both cases a Decree determines the overall merit of public service broadcasting and defines the scope of its activities; more specific tasks are written down in periodic service contracts that contain performance indicators. The main difference between PSB-policy in the two communities lies in the nature of the performance indicators and, as a consequence, of the performance analysis. These differences are themselves the result of divergent PSB-traditions in the two communities and – significantly – of different political and cultural legacies. Since the two regions have become more independent, Flanders tends to follow a northern European style of governing characterised by checks and balances to ensure a certain autonomy for its institutions. The French-speaking part has been hesitant to take the hands-off approach, so here the grip of politicians on different sectors of society is still quite tight. Moreover, French-speaking Belgians share the concern of their linguistic counterparts elsewhere about the position of their own language and culture. The cultural remit of French-language PSB's has always been marked by these concerns, with broadcasting being seen as a kind of ideological Maginot line against Anglo-Saxon cultural (and economic) domination. The Flemish seem less bothered by such concerns about broadcasting's cultural remit.

The Belgian case

The changes in Belgian PSB-policy, and the introduction of a service contract in particular, were not so much inspired by debates about the funding of public broadcasting as by a wish to make public broadcasters more independent from political actors. A lack of autonomy was traditionally one of the main dysfunctionalities of the Belgian broadcasting system (Servaes, 1998; Antoine, d'Haenens & Saeys, 2001), and indeed of all public service utilities in Belgium. The system of service contracts was therefore not limited to the broadcasting sector. It was also introduced for public transport, telecommunications and postal services. Since the main goal was to strengthen the independence of these public institutions, the service contract system should be evaluated in terms of autonomy effects. However, as a result of the communication of the European Commission the scheme also needs to be analysed in terms of accountability effects and the culture/commerce debate. In other words, the cultural dilemma for Belgian PSB's is complemented by a political challenge, namely to remain independent from the shareholder.

Assessing VRT

The system of service contracts for VRT was introduced with the 1995-1997 reform of PSB in Flanders. The VRT (then called BRTN) had reached an all time low in viewing ratings and seemed unable to respond to the growing challenges of increasing competition. Although many factors contributed to this, politicised management became the main target for reform. The power of the politicised Board of Administration was diminished, the appointment of senior management was no longer based on party affiliation, and the introduction of 4-year service contracts was seen as a way to get politics out of the everyday management of PSB there. One important element is that it 'objectivated' the annual raise of the level of funding for VRT. The funding mechanism provided the public broadcaster with an annual increase of 4 %, pending political approval. The criteria on which this raise would be approved were very unclear, ironically making it an ideal instrument for keeping VRT on a tight leash. By attaching the annual increase with specific targets, determined by the service contract, VRT anyway gained some financial independence.

VRT is now operating under its second service contract for the 2002-2006 period after successfully meeting the targets of the first contract (1997-2001). This service contract (Vlaamse Gemeenschap, 2001) uses the overall PSB-remit, as defined in the 1995 Broadcasting Decree, as the framework for establishing performance indicators that comprise the core of the service contracts. The indicators measure PSB-performance in audience reach, programme supply, as well as financial and technical matters.

Although there are few differences between the first and second service contracts, the first performance indicator of the 2002-2006 service contract is new and likely at least partly the result of the EC's statement on the funding of public service broadcasting (European Commission, 2001). It is also partly the result of the failure to emphasise VRT's distinctiveness in the first service contract. The first PI asks VRT to take measures to increase the quality of its output and to report on its quality policy each year. Programme quality has been operationalised – tentatively – by distinguishing five quality dimensions:

- '*Public quality*' is the extent to which a programme fits in with the societal role of PSB;
- '*Functional quality*' is the extent to which a programme fits in with the needs of the audience;
- '*Ethical quality*' is the extent to which a programme is in line with ethical and deontological values;
- '*Operational quality*' is the extent to which a programme is produced in an efficient way;
- '*Professional quality*' is the extent to which a programme is in line with professional standards of audiovisual production.

These quality dimensions clearly integrate the culture/commerce struggle of VRT. Quality is both the value a programme has for society and the value it has for the audience. These are not necessarily the same because audience needs and societal needs can be quite conflicting. Whereas private broadcasters are more likely to choose audience needs above societal needs (because this pleases advertisers), a public broadcaster can be expected to choose differently. How far should public broadcasters care about audience needs when quite often audience needs and societal needs are inseparable? After all, society is also audiences. Where there is a conflict between societal needs and the needs of a particular audience, then surely society should come first because those concerns are far bigger than merely watching television or listening to radio. 'Down-sizing' audience needs is, however, something no broadcaster would dare risk saying aloud.

Moreover, audience needs are quite unpredictable. Does anyone think any 21st century broadcaster *chooses* to generate low ratings? In general, low ratings are unintended. They are either the result of a lack of knowledge about 'audience needs' or popular appeal; a lack of knowledge that in itself is not the result of a lack of research, but rather because even the most advanced market research cannot avoid the occasional flop. And if audience needs cannot be predicted accurately even with advanced research techniques, how can we measure in hindsight whether a programme filled an audience need? Thus, the VRT service contract and its performance indica-

tors simplify this: if people actually watched it and liked it, than it filled a need. It all becomes quite tautological in practice.

Specific performance indicators dealing with radio and television comprise the bulk of the service contract. Eight performance indicators define the remit of VRT's television service, six of which refer to audience appeal with only two referring to broadcasting output. The PI's on audience appeal are: a weekly reach of at least 70 per cent of the audience; a daily reach of at least 1.5 million viewers with news and current affairs programmes; score an average merit-figure (scores from 0 to 10, awarded electronically by members of the audience figures panel after viewing a programme) of at least 7.5 for information, entertainment and drama; a weekly reach of at least 15 per cent of the audience for its cultural programmes; a weekly reach of at least 10 per cent of the audience for its educational programmes; and a weekly reach of at least 70 per cent of 4- to 12-year olds.

The overall remit of VRT's television service is stated as follows: "Television should bring a high-quality offer of information, culture, education, sports and entertainment. VRT should reach the largest possible audience by offering a diverse supply of programming aimed at generating the audience's interest" (Vlaamse Gemeenschap, 2001, own translation). Although the performance indicators underscore the 'high-quality' and 'diverse supply' elements of the overall remit, they emphasise the ratings element.

A second series of television performance indicators oblige VRT to implement a system of quality control by continuously optimising its television schedule or by continuously investigating the audience's appraisal for the programmes by use of qualitative research methods. The VRT's radio service operates under similar performance indicators. Other PI's deal with technical, personnel and financial matters.

Although the remit of VRT is very broad as defined by the 1995 Broadcasting Decree, we notice a clear focus in the performance indicators on two aspects: quality and audience reach. The other elements that are part of the overall PSB-remit (diversity of supply, 'public sphere' benefits, cultural remit) are somewhat neglected in these performance indicators. The debates in the build up to the first and second service contracts are responsible for this. The service contracts addressed VRT's weakest points at the time: its low ratings in the mid-1990s and its perceived lack of 'distinctiveness' in the early 2000s. Getting the lost audience back was the first priority for the new VRT management, and thus became the central goal in the first service contract and was maintained in the second service contract.

The debate in the run-up to the second service contract then led to the high emphasis on 'quality'. VRT had been very successful in winning back the audience. Its television market share rose from 27.8 % at the beginning of the first service contract in 1997 to 33.5 % when the first contract ended in 2001. And it has continued to rise to 37.6 % in 2004 (Audimetrie, 2005), much to the dismay of the private channels. As a pattern and rule, when public channels get higher ratings private competitors quickly raise ques-

tions about the public channels' distinctiveness. This well-known weakness of PSB reflects the culture/commerce struggle. In Flanders, too, private operators and some commentators attributed the success of public channels to the adoption of 'commercial-like programming', i.e. light entertainment, sports and a 'dumbing-down' of its informational content. In fact, it was not so much VRT's programming that changed but rather its success.

Since the main private media group, De Persgroep (owns 50 % of the main private television group), has historical ties with the Liberal Party that was in power at the time the second service contract was negotiated, there was a tendency to follow the private broadcaster's discourse. One of the results specified limits on the amount of commercial funding VRT could generate via radio advertising and also sponsorship on both radio and television. A second result of the private competitors' interference was a move to emphasise VRT's distinctiveness by renewing and strengthening its commitment to quality, illustrated by the first performance indicator of the new 2002-2006 service contract.

When the VRT was unpopular, its remit was never questioned, which explains partly why the service contract pays little attention to the PSB-remit of the corporation. However, the absence of much of the PSB-remit in performance indicators must also be seen in light of the initial goal to strengthen the autonomy of the public broadcaster. A plethora of performance indicators on all aspects of VRT's activities would have been seen as a new way of keeping a tight grip on the public broadcaster. Instead, VRT was given ample freedom to do whatever it wants as long as its two main goals – getting back part of the lost audience and proving its distinctiveness – were met.

Assessing RTBF

The background to RTBF's new policy scheme is similar. It's about reforming an ailing (due to political interference and a constant lack of funding) public broadcasting corporation. The main elements of the 1997 reform were the introduction of a new management structure and a service contract system. The results, however, are quite different due to divergent traditions in the two linguistic communities. The nature and number of performance indicators in the second service contract (2002-2005) suggest an entirely different approach in the French-speaking community. The hands-off approach of the Dutch-speaking community was only followed in theory. In practice, RTBF's service contract ties the hands of the public broadcaster to such an extent that there is hardly any freedom. In essence, RTBF's service contract provides the public broadcaster with a 4-year programming schedule that leaves very little room for either editorial freedom or adapting to new situations.

Most of RTBF's performance indicators in the 2002-2005 service contract (CSA, 2001, 11 October) are about production and scheduling targets. The long list of PI's include the following minimum requirements for RTBF's

television schedule: three news broadcasts a day and on every week day one regional news programme and one youth news programme of at least 6 minutes; at least 50 broadcasts a year of music, dance or theatre performances, of which at least 12 take place in the French Community; at least 120 feature films, of which 40 'independent' movies and one-third should be produced in Belgium; and not more than three soap-operas per day. The PI's for radio are similar.

It is clear that RTBF is given little space to independently determine its radio and television schedules between 2002 and 2005. When all the PI's are fulfilled, RTBF's schedule is more or less fixed. On the other hand, RTBF is given complete freedom in reaching audience targets. In contrast to VRT, no audience quotas have been set for RTBF. However, this is an illusory freedom because RTBF – as with any public broadcaster – is politically and economically vulnerable when ratings drop too much. So although RTBF is not officially obliged to reach a certain audience, in practice it must reach some minimum audience to survive.

The comparison is most striking when we look at the cultural remit of both broadcasters. VRT has only one cultural PI: to reach 15 % of the audience on a weekly basis with its cultural programming. RTBF has several PI's that effectively lay out its entire cultural programming for the next three to four years. This example reflects the two main differences in PSB-policy on these sides of the Belgian language divide. In the French-speaking community there has always been a greater emphasis on the public broadcaster's cultural remit and politicians are less inclined to let the broadcaster decide for itself how it performs its tasks. Of course both approaches have advantages: the VRT's cultural PI could stimulate creativity more, but does hugely tempt emphasising popular culture in its cultural programming while ignoring the arts. This has been an often-heard remark. The RTBF's cultural PI's force it to pay attention to the arts, but are very restrictive on the producers' creativity.

In performance analysis, as well, one notices differences in the level of independence, but in this case favouring RTBF. Both VRT and RTBF must conduct a performance analysis and are ultimately accountable to the Parliaments of the Flemish and French Communities respectively. But in the French-speaking Community there is an intermediary body, the Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel (CSA) that reports on RTBF's performance analysis, while VRT reports directly to Parliament. Thus, in Dutch-speaking Belgium there are only two actors in the assessment procedure, neither of which can be called independent: the broadcaster and its political guardian. This creates two potential problems. It undermines the validity of VRT's self-assessment because the assessment of VRT's analysis is left entirely in the hands of MP's, most of whom get easily flabbergasted by VRT's impressive statistics and suave PowerPoint-presentations. Secondly, the lack of an independent analysis opens the door for politicians to draw conclusions in an arbitrary way based on anything other than an objective assessment.

The RTBF's system with the CSA first analysing performance and then publicly reporting on that seems more in line with a modern, distant relationship between broadcaster and government, and also with the European Commission's wishes. In practice, however, the CSA is highly politicised, creating a void in the assessment process. In neither case, then, is there room for a truly independent analysis of the performance of the public broadcaster. But let's move beyond the case of Belgium to compare PSB-policy frameworks across Europe.

Element one – the service contract

The system of service contracts was introduced in the 1990s in Belgium, Italy, Portugal and Sweden, and in recent years was extended to Denmark, France and Ireland, following a national and/or European debate on PSB-policy. Other countries such as the UK or the Netherlands might follow this trend in the coming years. A full analysis of the system of service contracts in the countries where such a scheme is in place can be found in Coppens (2004).

Table 1. Current PSB-service contracts

Countries	Broadcaster	Name of the contract	Current duration
Belgium	VRT	Beheersovereenkomst	2002-2006
	RTBF	Contrat de gestion	2002-2005
Denmark	DR	public service-kontrakt	2003-2006
	TV2	public service-kontrakt	2003-2006
France	FranceTélévisions	Contrat d'objectifs et de moyens	2001-2005
Ireland	RTÉ	PSB-Charter	2004- ?
Italy	RAI	Contratto di servizio	2003-2005
Portugal	RTP (gen.)	Contrato de concessão geral	2003-2019
	RTP (2nd channel)	Contrato de concessão especial	2003-2011
	RDP	Contrato de concessão	1999-2014
Sweden	SVT	Sändningstillstånd	2002-2005
	SR	Sändningstillstånd	2002-2005

Although the structure of the new PSB-policy framework is similar in all these countries, with each containing the three core elements, there is great variation when looking into respective schemas. This variety can be explained by the specific national political and cultural context in which a PSB broadcaster operates. One finds variation in:

- *Duration*: most service contracts cover a 3- to 5-year period, but in Portugal one contract runs for no less than 16 years;

- *Scope*: many service contracts (such as VRT) cover all aspects of public broadcasting (output, funding, personnel, technology) while others (such as in Sweden) focus mainly on output;
- *Financial consequences*: in some service contracts (notably Denmark and Sweden) there is no mention of direct financial consequences as a result of (non-)compliance. In Belgium, France and Italy, however, PSB's performance have direct effects on funding;
- *Control*: the ultimate control over public broadcasting is always the prerogative of the political institution, but in many countries regulatory bodies play an important intermediary role, thus creating a more independent relationship between PSB and politics. This is officially the case in French-speaking Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, France and Portugal, although the role of the regulatory body in the latter two countries is fairly limited. In Dutch-speaking Belgium and Italy, the existing regulatory bodies have no business in PSB-accountability.

Service contracts cannot escape the culture/commerce dialectic because they are, essentially, business-like tools for strengthening and clarifying a cultural remit. As a business tool, the service contract therefore fits with a general movement in the direction of a more managerial approach to PSB. In many countries, the 'traditional' PSB-managers with long-standing histories inside their respective corporations have been ousted in favour of a new generation of PSB-managers that often do not have careers in PSB and for whom the values traditionally connected with PSB seem awkward and intangible. This new generation of PSB-managers finds tangible targets easier to work with than vague societal remits.

Of course the service contract system is not used exclusively for broadcasting. As stated earlier, it has been implemented in governing schemas for all kinds of public services, from public transport to postal services. But the contracts mesh with Europe's new business-oriented preoccupation to public service broadcasting by specifying objectives and, in several cases, linking PSB performance with its level of funding.

As a business tool, such contracts offer other advantages: flexibility and autonomy. Broadcasting laws are usually the result of several years of work and are not always easily and quickly changed. Service contracts for a limited time are more flexible and allow governments and broadcasters to adapt their policies more quickly to a rapidly changing environment. Moreover, service contracts can create a more distant relationship between PSB and its political guardians. The interference of political actors can be limited to those periods in which the service contracts are up for renewal. The broadcaster, on the other hand, can operate quite independently while the service contract is in force. However, the opposite is just as easily realised. The comparison between VRT and RTBF clarifies: in one case the autonomy of the public broadcaster has been enhanced by the new schema, while in the other case the effects in terms of independence are rather disappointing.

Using a business tool for what remains, at least in part, a cultural activity might solve some issues but must create new problems. Important to note is the ‘closed’ way in which service contracts are negotiated and signed. Typically, little or no public debate is accorded the renewal of a service contract. So as the focus of PSB-policy shifts from parliamentary legislation to contract negotiation, a democratic deficit is possible. Many authors (Siune, 1998; Wheeler, 2001) have supported the idea of more public debate in PSB-policy, but the new schema offers even fewer possibilities for open, public debate than earlier approaches. This is all the more worrying because we are dealing with an institution for which stimulating public debate on important issues is one of its most central tasks. More fundamental to the argument *per se*, Jakubowicz (2003b) points to methodological issues. It is tempting to make use of quantitative, measurable performance indicators that seem easier to evaluate. However, many indicators are lacking operationalisation and remain – by lack of definitions – just as vague as the ‘old’ general remit. Moreover, not every PSB-task is readily measurable, as becomes clear when studying the second element: performance indicators.

Element two – performance indicators

As stated earlier, we define performance indicators as specific tasks that need to be met within a limited period of time. They can be qualitative or quantitative and about any aspect of broadcasting (output, production, funding, staff, audience appeal, etc.). Every service contract contains performance indicators, although some are more elaborate in detailing specific tasks.

But there are ways other than service contracts to work with performance indicators. Even PSB companies without a service contract have performance indicators as defined above. A notable example is the BBC annual publication of a Statement of Commitments. This bears striking resemblance to the performance indicators found in many PSB service contracts. Although in this case the performance indicators are put forward by the broadcaster rather than by the political institution, they are still specific targets that need to be met within a certain timeframe, in this case a year. There are no formal sanctions should the BBC fail to meet its own targets, but the same holds for some of the PSB’s operating under a service contract.

Many kinds of performance indicators exist. Distinctions can be made between ‘economic’ PIs and “traditional PSB assessment measures” (Picard, 2003). Or, using our own terms, PIs that reflect the cultural side of PSB and indicators that reflect its industrial side. Economic performance indicators, according to Picard (2003), are indicators concerning audience appeal, productivity and financial matters.

Although Picard (2003) emphasises the importance of such indicators that essentially cover two basic elements of PSB – its financial well-being and its

relation to the audience – he also warns of an overemphasis on such indicators because, “PSBs risk moving their strategic choices closer to those of commercial firms and losing their distinctiveness and unique purpose and goals”. A balance between ‘economic’ and ‘traditional’ indicators of PSB’s performance needs to be found.

Jakubowicz (2003b) agrees on the importance of ‘audience’ PIs: audience appeal is important because PSB can only achieve its societal benefits when they reach an audience. But it isn’t only the size of the audience that is important. Its evaluation is becoming increasingly valid as an indicator for the performance of public broadcasters. To this end, many broadcasters have developed permanent research projects measuring the appreciation of the audience either for individual programmes or for the institution as a whole.

Despite the growing importance of ‘economic’ performance indicators, the bulk of the PI landscape is comprised of ‘traditional’ indicators that usually refer to the broadcasting output, such as channel diversity, quality or matters of ethics. These PIs are more in line with the broader PSB-remit, but correspondingly more difficult to define (and thus to serve as a basis on which to evaluate PSB-performance). When used in abundance they can appear too restrictive, as the RTBF-example has shown.

But is there such a clear distinction between ‘economic’ and ‘traditional’ performance indicators as one may be led to think? The provision that VRT should attract at least 15 % of the audience with its cultural programming seems to be an ‘economic’ PI, while the provision of France Télévisions to reserve a place for cultural programming in prime-time seems to be a ‘traditional’ PI. When looking closer, however, what is the difference between these two indicators? The idea behind both PIs is actually the same: cultural programming should not only be produced, it should also be scheduled to potentially reach a certain audience to maximise its benefits. In other words, the underlying idea of every PI should be ‘traditional’ – in line with the PSB-remit – but the same principal can be served by a ‘traditional’ or an ‘economic’ indicator. In this particular example, the ‘economic’ indicator might actually be preferable since it does give more freedom to the broadcaster in scheduling operations. Again, the line between culture and commerce cannot be clearly drawn. The PI-system therefore does little to solve public broadcasters’ dilemma.

Another distinction can be made between qualitative PIs and quantitative PIs. Most of the existing PIs are qualitative and deal with ethical matters or PSB-values such as quality, diversity and innovation, without using specific, numerical targets. The number of quantitative PIs is actually quite limited, except in Belgium where most of the indicators used to measure the performance of both VRT and RTBF are quantitative.

Quantitative PIs have the advantage of being clear, but they have the downside of not being useful for key aspects of the PSB-concept. Certainly when faced with the democratic remit of PSB, such as the diversity of (political) opinions, quantitative PIs would do more harm than good and would

mean a return to a distasteful past when the stopwatch was used to ‘measure’ alleged PSB-bias.

Like the service contract, performance indicators are business tools used for cultural purposes and therefore show the same paradoxes as the service contract. In this case, the conflict comes from the attempt to make the unmeasurable measurable. Obviously, diversity is measurable to a point. Audience appeal is measurable to a point. Even quality is measurable to a point. But the wider PSB-remit, the function it fulfils for political and cultural life in contemporary societies is larger than a series of specific targets and far more complex than quantitatively measurable criteria. Just as the European Union found it impossible to put a price on the PSB-remit, it is equally unachievable to put it all into one big table with variables, means and modes. The PSB-remit as an ideal, as an ethic and as a practice cannot be reduced to mere numbers, for either funding or accountability concerns.

Performance indicators should thus be handled with care, especially since PI’s create the basis on which the performance of public broadcasters is ‘measured’ and consequently can effect the funding of these broadcasters. The main problem in using PI’s in the performance analysis, the third element of the new PSB-policy approach, lies in the definition of the concepts used. PI’s are used to measure the performance of public broadcasters, but it is not always clear what exactly is being ‘measured’. And, especially when a performance analysis has financial consequences, badly defined PI’s can be a major threat for public broadcasters.

Element three – performance analysis

Performance indicators presuppose performance analysis, which is the third element of new PSB-policy. The most common way to conduct performance analysis is for the broadcaster to make a self-evaluation and report annually to Parliament on its performance. In some cases, such as Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany, there is an intermediary body in the form of a regulatory institution. In such cases the evaluation of the broadcaster is evaluated by the regulatory body which in turn reports to the political institution. In other countries, public broadcasters must report to both the political institution and the regulatory body separately, and often a different evaluation is required by each. This is the case in France, the UK, Finland and Portugal. Meanwhile, in Italy, Spain, Austria and Dutch-speaking Belgium the regulatory bodies have no part in PSB-performance analysis.

The first, and often the only step, in the performance analysis is self-evaluation. Often the service contract or broadcasting law determines what the broadcaster should include in its analysis. Self-evaluation is a necessary part of the accountability process, but the question is whether an exclusive reliance on self-evaluation is a good long-term idea for the public broadcaster.

Non-committal self-evaluation can, over time, be taken less seriously by the broadcaster. And when direct financial consequences are linked with such evaluation, it rather naturally becomes an instrument of defence. Obviously neither situation is desirable. Public broadcasting owes it to itself, its audience and funders to take self-evaluation seriously, but if public broadcasting is to take risks and be innovative it must also be permitted to occasionally fail and to make efforts at improving itself. That won't happen if PSB companies must suffer such consequences from the first bad report. Connecting financial consequences to PSB performance, as is the case in Dutch-speaking Belgium, Italy, Portugal and France, can only inhibit an open and honest self-evaluating process.

External evaluation can be a useful complimentary tool of performance analysis. External audits, however, have quite a negative image because they have been frequently applied when a public broadcasting company has been in crisis. Most European PSB's were thoroughly reformed in the 1990s, and in many cases an external audit by a private consultancy firm played an important part in the reform process (e.g. major reforms of public broadcasting in Belgium and the Netherlands were based on McKinsey-reports). Financial auditing is more common: most public broadcasting companies are audited annually by an accounting firm. But a robust system of external and recurrent full-scale auditing is scarce. The Netherlands did opt for such a system when it chose to introduce a review schema as a result of which the activities of the entire public broadcasting network will be audited every 5 years. This is not done by a consultant firm, but rather by a group of experts working independently from the broadcaster and from the political institution. Bardoel (2003), himself a member of the first auditing committee which published its results in April 2004, seems moderately positive about the idea. Another model of external evaluation is the Forum-model, used recently in Ireland. Here all actors (public and private broadcasters, civil society, experts and members of the general public) could submit their own views on broadcasting policy to the 2002 Forum on Broadcasting, which then – itself a body of experts – suggested a new policy approach towards broadcasting in Ireland.

The biggest benefits of external evaluation are that it stimulates the public broadcaster to look at itself in a critical way, and that public policy is not only based on the broadcaster's evaluation but on independent analysis. But external evaluation is also quite risky. Independence of the external auditing process is the prime concern.

Again, the crucial element of evaluation – whoever does it – is the validity of the process. Issues of validity are very frequent in performance analyses because concepts such as quality or culture are very hard to define, and thus to analyse. Lowe (2000:14), to give but one example, says that "The ways culture is defined by broadcasters are keyed in large part to a variety of self-serving rationales, which also accounts for why the term is often so hazy in definition". In other words, public broadcasters define 'culture' in

ways that serve their own purposes, making good use of the fact that there is no universally accepted definition of culture. VRT, for example, makes programmes such as 'Vlaanderen Vakantieland' (a holiday programme) and 'De Leukste Eeuw' (funny clips from the VRT archive) as some of its most prominent 'cultural' programmes, with which they should reach 15 % of the weekly audience. There seems to be no solution for the definition problem. But what can and should be done is that any performance analysis, whether done by the broadcaster itself or by an external body, should be very clear about how they have defined the concepts that are part of the analysis (Collins & Purnell, 1996). Then, and only then, can an analysis be worthwhile, although the controversy will inevitably remain, whatever the definitions used.

Conclusions

The new performance-driven PSB-policy framework should not be seen as an annoying new way of bothering already struggling public broadcasters. Ultimately, accountability should be seen as an integral part of the PSB-remit and one of the key elements of distinctiveness of public service broadcasting. I fully agree with Foster (1992:49) when he states that: "public broadcasters, whatever their remit, should ultimately account for their actions to the providers of their funding". On the other hand, authors such as Bardoel (2003), Born (2003) and Jakubowicz (2003a) warn about bureaucracy and a too rigid accountability framework. There is a danger that this latest, extensive wave of accountability is turning the broadcasters' attention away from their central democratic and cultural remit, which is after all the whole point of the enterprise and exercise.

It should also be clear that the new PSB-policy schema has advantages and disadvantages for public broadcasters, depending on how it is implemented. Service contracts and performance indicators can, as the Belgian case illustrates, be seen as liberating or restricting. But perhaps the most important element of the new PSB-policy framework is the increasing reliance on performance analysis and the consequences that such an analysis can have for the future of public broadcasting. Therefore, what McQuail (1992) calls "media performance analysis", must be independent (from the broadcaster and from the political institution), relevant (i.e. based on PI's that do cover the PSB-remit) and thorough (using a variety of research methods). In most cases, however, that delicate and necessary balance between the independence of the public broadcaster and society's right to hold its broadcaster accountable, is yet to be found.

So does this new phase in PSB-policy offer any solutions for the cultural dilemmas that public broadcasting faces? If anything the work here illustrates that it mainly reaffirms and again illustrates the cultural dilemma challenging public service broadcasting. Although the new policy framework seems

perfectly in line with a modern style of governing, centred on keywords such as efficiency and accountability and with the wishes of national and supranational political authorities supported, a fundamental friction remains. The struggle inside and outside public broadcasting corporations to reconcile a fundamentally cultural remit and tradition with a business-oriented approach will not end with this latest phase in PSB-development. If all the PSB reforms and restructurations of the past twenty years have not been able to resolve these issues, it must beg the question as to whether the two can even be made compatible? Why isn't making a choice between the two a valid alternative?

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Which Publics, What Services?

British Public Service Broadcasting Beyond 2006

Brian McNair

British public service broadcasting has reached a pivotal moment in its evolution. As this essay went to press the future of the main, publicly-funded provider, the BBC, was still under review as part of the process of renewal of its licence (or Royal Charter). In March 2005 the UK government published its green paper Review of the BBC's Royal Charter, with a further white paper scheduled for late 2005 and legislation thereafter. While Charter renewal is a recurring, even routine event in the affairs of the BBC, the current cycle is given added urgency by the approach of digitalisation, with the government committed to analogue 'switch off' by 2012. Digitalisation does not threaten the continuing existence of the BBC in the short and medium-term, as we shall see, or its dominance of British public service broadcasting.

But the imminent arrival of multi-channel TV in every British household poses major long-term challenges to the ethos and legitimacy of an organisation founded in the era of spectrum scarcity and limited viewer choice. What does 'public service' mean in an era when every viewer has access not to four, or forty, but to 440 channels, supplying every conceivable taste and preference? And how can the British people, as they grow accustomed to this abundance of provision, most of which they will be paying for through various forms of subscription, be persuaded to maintain their support for the BBC's licence fee, not just next year, or in 2006 when the new charter will come into effect, but in ten, twenty, and thirty years time?

Digitalisation poses still greater challenges to the other component of the UK's historic public service 'duopoly', the ITV network (channel 3) which, though commercially funded from advertising revenue, has always been required to accept public service programming obligations in return for lucrative access privileges to scarce analogue spectrum. The advertising-funded channels Four and Five, launched in 1982 and 1997 respectively, have also had public service broadcasting remits supported by various forms of subsidy. All three commercial providers face a substantial erosion of audience share after analogue switch off. This means that their ability to maintain the kinds of programming currently understood as 'public service' will come under

unprecedented financial strain. On the one hand, their advertising revenue will shrink as a proportion of the total available in an expanded marketplace of digital channels. On the other, with the disappearance of scarce analogue spectrum, their ability to charge premium rates for advertising time will erode. In the absence of compensation PSB provision will become an unacceptable cost burden for commercial companies. As the broadcast regulator Ofcom puts it, “the historical compact in which PSB was provided by the commercial broadcasters in return for privileges and discounted access to the analogue system” is no longer viable.

How, against this background, can public service broadcasting be preserved as part of the UK’s commercial TV ecology? And should it be? Do we even need PSB anymore? To answer that question the following discussion draws on documents published as part of the regulator Ofcom’s ongoing *Review of Public Service Television Broadcasting*, which reflect the findings of extensive audience research, as well as consultations with public organisations and lobby groups, broadcast professionals, academics and others with an interest or stake in the future of PSB in the UK. As of writing, Ofcom’s review was not yet complete, but the main issues facing British PSB were becoming clear.

- What does public service broadcasting mean in the 21st century of digital, interactive television, and what is it for?
- Is PSB required, or desired, by the audiences (publics) who will have to pay for its services through taxation?
- If the answer to the second of those questions is yes, then how in a multi-channel environment can PSB be supplied in a manner which best ensures optimal quality and value for money?

Preamble – defending the BBC

During Margaret Thatcher’s premiership in the 1980s, public service broadcasting in the United Kingdom, and the BBC in particular, came under ferocious attack. Following Mrs Thatcher’s departure from office in 1990 her Conservative successor, John Major, did not pursue her anti-BBC vendetta. The election of New Labour in 1997 further changed the political environment in the BBC’s favour. Labour’s first Culture secretary, Chris Smith, was openly pro-BBC. In September 1999 he declared that “what public service means is changing. But it needs a redefinition rather than a requiem”.

This statement was welcomed by those who believed in the importance for British society and culture of a healthy public service broadcasting system, and of a strong BBC, not least in the context of a rapidly evolving media environment characterised by technology-driven market fragmentation and channel proliferation. In 1997 Andrew Graham and Gavyn Davies argued

that “the new technology which reinforces both commercial pressures and globalisation does not remove the case for public service broadcasting – on the contrary it increases the need for it” (Davies, 1997:4). They meant that in the era of fragmented communities, fractured identities and multiculturalism, public service broadcasting of the type provided by the BBC was more essential than ever for the maintenance of a common ‘national’ culture. If the monolithic public service model exemplified by the BBC since the 1920s had once been rightly criticised for its tendencies to ideological closure, cultural elitism and metro-centrism, the multi-channel possibilities of cable, satellite and digital technology had the potential, it was argued, to liberate the notion of public service, refreshing and renewing it for a new century. This would be a century in which, while individuals still want to occupy some common cultural space with their neighbours, difference and diversity would be celebrated as never before. This was an era in which there was not one public, but many publics to serve.

It is often forgotten that in the UK system free-to-air commercial broadcasters also have a legally imposed public service remit, requiring minimum standards in the quantity and quality of broadcast journalism, documentary and other categories of public service programming. The maintenance of these standards, and some degree of consensus on what they are, is recognised by most commentators to be dependent on the existence of the BBC as a well-resourced market leader. With a budget in 2004 of more than £2.5 billion, the BBC more than ever defines the economic and aesthetic parameters within which the commercial public service broadcasters ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5 operate, and the standards they must reach to achieve ‘quality’. While the commercial channels cannot match the resources of the BBC, which has nearly 3,000 staff working on its news output alone, the corporation’s existence shapes audience expectations in ways which, until now, have inhibited commercially-driven decline in programming standards elsewhere in the broadcast sector. Even broadcasters such as Sky which have no public service responsibility must, if they wish to be recognised as a quality brand in the British media market place, seek to emulate the standards set by the BBC, especially in high profile and politically sensitive content categories like news and current affairs. Thus it is that Sky News, owned by the same company (News Corporation) as runs the oft-criticised *Sun* and the *News of the World* tabloid newspapers, and the overtly patriotic Fox News in the USA, could win the Royal Television Society’s award for news broadcaster of the year in 2001. I have previously argued (McNair, 2003) that the quality of journalism on the Sky News channel, such as it is, is directly linked to the status of the BBC as the recognised standard setter in British broadcast journalism. Without such a presence, as the content of Fox News demonstrates in the USA, News Corporation would have less incentive to pursue balance and impartiality in the UK. Across the range of broadcast output, at any given time, BBC programming defines what public service broadcasting means in practice, and pulls other providers up to its level.

If this is not argument enough for the preservation of a strong BBC, the corporation can also be defended on straightforward value for money grounds. As a reader of a broadsheet newspaper, I happily pay more than £150 per year for a daily dose of my preferred title. As a licence fee payer, I will give the BBC rather less than that – £126 in 2004-05 – for my household's access to two television and five radio channels by traditional terrestrial delivery. If I have cable or satellite, which of course cost extra to install and rent, I can access free of charge services like BBC News 24 and BBC Parliament. If I have access to a computer (and well over half of UK households were online as of this writing) I can use the BBC Online service, one of the world's leading websites. Compare that expenditure with the cost of nearly £500 per year that UK subscribers to the full range of BSkyB's pay-per-view movie and sport channels will pay News Corporation and its shareholders. In so far as that £126 performs the additional function of maintaining competitive pressure on the commercial providers of public service broadcasting it has an obvious, if indirect benefit, even to those who don't watch very much of the BBC's output.

Whether one considers the issue from the lofty perspective of cultural policy, then, or merely the value-for-money considerations often cited by its enemies, the arguments for the continuing existence of a publicly-funded BBC are strong, and are not disputed by the Labour government. In May 2002 the Labour minister responsible for broadcasting policy stated her belief that the foundation of the British public service system – the BBC's licence fee – was safe for at least fifteen years, a position consistent with the BBC-friendly tone of the Communication Bill published that same month. Despite concerns about the implications of this legislation for the future ownership and regulation of commercial broadcasting in Britain it was widely received as an endorsement of the PSB status quo, and the BBC's central role within it as a financially and politically independent organisation, protected from the untrammelled workings of the media marketplace. A year-on-year funding settlement of 1.5% above inflation was agreed between the government and BBC managers in 2001, to last until charter renewal in 2006. This was subject to successful cost-cutting on management and bureaucracy, and the review of subscription services, but allowed the organisation to plan ahead under the leadership of then-Director General Greg Dyke with a degree of certainty which commercial broadcasters could only envy. In the words of one observer, the government had accepted the view that public service broadcasting was “a crucial force for good” in Britain, and “should be funded sufficiently to remain an unfettered public service broadcaster across a rapidly developing marketplace”.

On July 4 2002 the BBC was awarded the licence to operate the UK's digital terrestrial TV platform, following the collapse of ITV Digital earlier in the year (with the BBC working, ironically perhaps, in collaboration with BSkyB). Alongside that decision, several new BBC channels were approved, such as BBC3, BBC4 and cBeebies for children. In supporting and facilitating these

decisions the Labour government was endorsing the view that the BBC, in addition to its traditional PSB responsibilities, should play a key role in driving the transition from analogue to digital broadcasting in Britain, a process which has no chance of meeting the government's 2012 target for analogue switchoff without the corporation's active support.

The digital challenge

Governmental support notwithstanding, digitalisation presents a greater challenge to the traditional model of a publicly-funded BBC than the worst intentions of a Thatcher or a Murdoch. According to the regulator Ofcom, it will "completely transform the viewing experience, towards a more fragmented, interactive and personalised model", and from "a passive scheduled experience to to an active consumer-led activity". Consider this personal anecdote. A friend, a Ph.D in bio-technology and a lecturer in a Scottish university, challenges me on the need for the BBC. 'Why', says he, 'should I pay for services which I don't watch or listen to?' He prefers specialist movie, sports, education and lifestyle channels, for which he pays a hefty subscription to BSkyB (see above). He doesn't see why he should also have to pay the BBC for something he doesn't want, and resents the compulsoriness of the licence fee system. My friend is one of a growing number of TV viewers who watch more and more cable and satellite, and less free-to-air. Between 1998 and 2003 audiences for the five free-to-air UK channels dropped by eleven per cent, to 76% of total UK TV viewing, and that proportion falls further each year as digitalisation proceeds.

Let's assume, unlikely as it is, that my friend and the people who share his household never tune in to any of the BBC television or radio services. Why should he still have to pay a licence fee and thereby support a system of public service broadcasting for which he feels no need or affinity? In the era of consumer sovereignty, why should the BBC receive special protection from the vicissitudes of individual choice? I've suggested some reasons above, but in the future there will be more and more people like this, who feel that what the BBC does is of little or no relevance to them, and that in a world where TV and internet services eat up more and more of one's disposable income, one should have the option of not paying for the upkeep of unwanted channels. One doesn't have to accept the logic of this argument to recognise that it has its supporters, and that it poses a potential long-term threat to the legitimacy of a publicly-funded BBC. This threat, though given practical urgency by the emergence of multi-channel technology, is at root cultural. Addressing that threat, neutralising it, and securing the future of British public service broadcasting not just for fifteen years but for fifty, means making the BBC popular not just with government ministers but au-

diences, actual and potential. And this in conditions where there is more competition than ever before for their attentions and their loyalties.

It's fair to say that BBC managers recognised this need some years ago. The appointment of Greg Dyke as Director General in June 1999 signalled a new approach to the running of the organisation. In contrast to John Birt's successful if deeply unpopular managerialism, Dyke was regarded as a populist, schooled in commercial television, with a reputation as a scheduling genius. He succeeded Birt with a commitment to engaging fully with the new possibilities offered by the digital revolution (the alliance with BSkyB on digital terrestrial television was one outcome of that commitment), and exploiting commercial opportunities where appropriate, while fully retaining core public service values such as universality of access and the impartiality of news and current affairs provision. But he was also committed to a review of what public service means, and embraced the popular with greater enthusiasm than any of his predecessors.

Nowhere was this approach more obvious than in those areas of programming deemed essential for good citizenship, such as news and current affairs. Following the poor ratings secured by BBC news in the 2001 general election Dyke commissioned a senior programme editor, Sian Kevill, to review news output as part of the corporation's New Politics Initiative. In 2002 the BBC published the results of Kevill's survey. Adopting what one commentator described as "consumerist terminology" the report reflected the corporation's new policy of reconciling its long-standing citizenship role with the demands of an increasingly "customer savvy", choice-rich audience. Kevill's study found that people wanted greater diversity of style and tone from their news and current affairs, greater accessibility in terms of language and subject matter, and a more personalised, less formal approach to coverage of politics. The report endorsed what had been happening to the BBC since 1999 in any case – the popularisation of the news agenda across the schedules; new, younger, more telegenic news presenters, more adventurous and eye-catching graphics; programme 'make overs' designed by image consultants and fashion gurus. Kevill's conclusions were welcomed at the highest levels of the BBC, and echoed work undertaken by this writer on public participation broadcasting, showing audience support for greater accessibility in political journalism (McNair et al, 2003). By late 2004 the implications of this thinking for programme form and content were beginning to be seen, as in an internal BBC memo which criticised the flagship current affairs strand *Panorama* for being "too distant, demanding, difficult and didactic".

Iraq, Hutton and the Ofcom review

This process of organisational self-evaluation was complicated by the onset of the US-UK invasion of Iraq in early 2003. As so often in British broadcasting

history, BBC coverage of the preparations, conduct and aftermath of war plunged the corporation into a period of especially tense, frequently hostile relations with the government of the day. Like Margaret Thatcher and Bernard Ingham before them (in the context of the 1982 Falklands war, and the 1986 bombing of Libya), the Coalition's war in Iraq saw Tony Blair and his Director of Communication, Alistair Campbell, fall out with the BBC over allegations of bias and unprofessionalism. Others will write the history of this period in the detail it merits. For our purposes here, it will suffice to note that the Andrew Gilligan affair, the death of government scientist David Kelly, and the subsequent inquiry by Lord Hutton plunged the BBC into a major crisis of confidence. When it was over both the Chairman of the board of governors and the Director General had been forced to resign, and the corporation's reputation for journalistic professionalism was tarnished. Just when British public service broadcasting needed all the friends it could get in the face of looming digitalisation and Royal Charter renewal, the BBC's standing was seriously damaged. Many observers predicted that the political environment had now been created in which far-reaching reform of the corporation could be imposed by a vindictive government. By coincidence, on the day of Hutton's publication a Conservative Party-sponsored report on PSB called *Beyond Charter Renewal* was also published, arguing for the abolition of the licence fee and the privatisation of most of the BBC's public service functions.

The Labour government denied that it would use these events to undermine the BBC and restated its commitment to British public service broadcasting. And, indeed, there has been nothing in the conduct of either BBC journalists or government ministers since Hutton which supports the pessimistic predictions of a cowed, supine corporation running scared as Charter renewal approaches. What there *has* been is regulator Ofcom's statutory review of public service broadcasting, as called for by the Communications Act of 2003. Phase 1 of the review, published in April 2004, presented the findings of content and audience research on how public service broadcasting has performed since 1998, and sought to identify the core values of PSB as seen by the British public. Its findings were encouraging for the advocates of PSB, in that a clear majority continued to support its provision, and the licence fee system which underpins it. As the report's authors put it, viewers "continue to see TV as a medium of social as well as personal importance. They appreciate quality, and value it when they see it" (p.57). Those surveyed by Ofcom also had "significant concerns about the extent to which the broadcasters value their opinions – they feel that a large amount of programming is imitative and underestimates their intelligence" (Ibid.). In summing up its assessment of the state of British thinking on broadcasting circa 2004, the review concluded that:

As consumers, we welcome the increased choice that competition has brought to television. But as citizens, we believe that television has responsibilities

that go beyond simply serving individual viewers with the programmes that they want. (p.2)

In so far as public service broadcasting is about citizenship, argued the regulator, it must provide programming which secures “the wider social objectives of UK citizens”. To this end Ofcom identified four aims of programming:

- To inform about, and increase understanding of the world;
- To reflect and strengthen cultural identity, particularly through the provision of high quality regional programmes;
- To stimulate interest in and knowledge of the arts, science and humanities;
- To support a tolerant and inclusive society (which may be viewed as an extension of the first aim above).

All this, added Ofcom, should be undertaken within a pluralistic organisational framework which through competition, encourages the pursuit of quality, creativity, innovation and independence in broadcasting, both from government and short-term commercial pressures. Public service and the satisfaction of popular taste in a competitive marketplace meant the provision both of the cultural resources required for good citizenship, such as impartial, independent, well-resourced news and current affairs, as well as the goods and services demanded by media consumers. British PSB, Ofcom concluded, will have to reconcile both sets of demands in the future, if its long-term survival is to be secured. And these demands should continue to be met, albeit to greater or lesser degrees, by all the public service broadcasters, whether licence-fee funded or commercial.

On this point, Phase 1 signalled Ofcom’s recognition that increasingly hard-pressed commercial organisations cannot be expected to dedicate the same resources to PSB functions as the BBC. In line with this thinking, the Culture Secretary announced in December 2004 that the regional ITV companies would be permitted to relinquish their commitment to non-news regional programming in the digital era. The review also hinted at a future where the BBC will be stripped of some of its more commercially viable activities, principally on grounds of fair competition, and be required to contract out more of its production than at present.

In short, while Phase 1 of Ofcom’s review was a clear statement of support for the principles of PSB as they have traditionally been understood in Britain, updated to suit the emergence of a more multicultural, interactive, consumer-oriented environment, it raised the possibility of greater demarcation in the future between the commercially viable and the publicly-subsidised. To accompany the publication of the Ofcom review one of the co-authors of its foreword wrote in that press that “we should focus regulatory intervention on those PSB characteristics to which citizens give the highest

social value and maximum viewer impact; and not fund that which the market will anyway provide". Ofcom concluded that British broadcasters will have to adopt:

...a creative approach which blends public purposes and popularity, that is serious in intent but accessible in style, and that finds new ways of leading audiences to interesting and challenging material.

Responding to this mood, the BBC's long-awaited announcement of its future plans in December 2004 indicated that henceforth there would be a focus on programmes of recognised 'public value' across the range of genres from news and current affairs to soap operas, reality TV and game shows. This policy shift was widely interpreted as a retreat from the 'populism' with which the BBC has been accused in its production of shows such as *Fame Academy*, and a return to 'core' public service values. In the interests of distinguishing itself more clearly from the commercial sector, the BBC also announced a withdrawal from many of its more commercially-oriented activities, including some of its websites, and the sale of divisions such as BBC Broadcast and BBC Resources. To further cut costs and prove that the BBC was lean and fit enough to merit Charter renewal, new Director General Mark Thompson announced 3,000 redundancies across the corporation (approximately 10 per cent of staff). To boost its regional production, Thompson announced that from 2010 significant segments of production capacity currently located in London would be moved to Manchester.

In all of these ways the BBC had by the beginning of 2005 demonstrated its commitment to the reform and streamlining of its operations in advance of Charter renewal. This was widely expected to be granted early in the third term of the Labour government. The BBC's future in the short to medium-term was thus considered secure by most commentators, although many predicted that the next ten-year Charter period, taking the corporation up to 2016, would be the final one in which the licence fee could be justified. These expectations were met in full when the government's green paper on Charter renewal was published in March 2005, confirming that the Charter would be renewed from 2006, and that licence fee funding would be secure for at least a decade.

PSB in the commercial sector

With the BBC safe for now, the biggest challenge to the future of British PSB resides in the commercial sector. As my introduction outlined, the disappearance of scarce analogue spectrum after digitalisation will fundamentally transform the business environment within which commercial public service broadcasters must operate. Phase 2 of the Ofcom review explored potential solu-

tions to this problem, including the release of channels 3, 4 and 5 from some of their public service obligations. The government, as already noted, has accepted that ITV should not be required to provide so much of its most expensive public service programming – non-news regional output – as has been customary under the analogue licensing system. This will not resolve the dilemma, however.

Ofcom's Phase 2 report, *Meeting the Digital Challenge*, estimated that, based on current projections for audience fragmentation, the loss caused by digitalisation to the UK's commercial broadcasters will be somewhere in the region of £300 million per annum. To make good this sum Ofcom has proposed the establishment of a Public Service Publisher, or PSP, which would function, as commentators put it, "to plug the public service gaps as the switch to digital continues to erode viewing shares for the existing terrestrial broadcasters". The PSP will be a not-for-profit commissioner and distributor of public service programming, a 'content hub' operated by an individual company such as Channel 4, or perhaps by a consortium drawn from the expanding independent production sector. The PSP could distribute public service programming not just on television and radio, but over the internet and down mobile phone networks. To this extent it would act as a bridge between broadcasting and broadband platforms, bringing public service programming into the era of digitalisation and interactivity.

Conclusion

As this essay went to press, the industry debate about the merits of a Public Service Publisher, and how and by whom it should be run was still in full swing. It was possible to conclude that the place of public service broadcasting in British culture was secure, although not without major reorientation of the sector. There will be a return to the pursuit of 'public values' by the BBC in return for Charter renewal, although the scope for disagreement on what constitutes public values remains. There will be a lightening, if not abandonment of public service requirements on commercial terrestrial broadcasters as they seek to make the transition to looming digitalisation. Whether these strategic moves will guarantee the longer term survival of public service broadcasting in the UK will depend on the direction of trends in media consumption and audience behaviour which no-one can predict with certainty. It will depend, too, on the extent to which the BBC and its commercial rivals can succeed in securing through programme quality the British people's continuing allegiance to the notion that public service broadcasting is important in their lives.

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Israeli Public Television and the Discourse of Program Quality

Broadcasting National History in a Multicultural Society

Eric Saranovitz

Throughout the 1990s, Israel experienced the confluence of two seemingly unconnected developments. Decades-old social and political conflicts were coming to a head in a way that was producing a new multi-cultural understanding of the nation; simultaneously, Israel's electronic media were undergoing rapid transformations as scores of cable channels and a new commercial network were added to what had previously been a monopolistic public television channel. These dual developments called into question the traditional role of public television and the Israel Broadcasting Authority (IBA) in serving its national constituency. This newly charged national ethos, together with a multi-channel broadcast system, allowed for the development of a new mandate within the Israel Broadcasting Authority – one based on traditional perspectives of public service broadcasting mixed with an identification of the multi-vocal nature of public discourse. With that in mind, this chapter investigates the discourse surrounding the production processes of a controversial multi-part documentary series that dealt with the history of Israel since the founding of the state. Based on a 2003 series of interviews with executives who managed Israel's public television channel and the IBA during the mid-1990s, the chapter illuminates the potential and limitations for public service television in a multicultural society¹.

Public service television – national community and multiple public spheres

Such an investigation necessarily questions the basis upon which the role of public service television in society has traditionally been premised. That basis has been a unified, or at least united, national community. For example, Tamar Liebes (2000), an esteemed Israeli scholar who has called for progressive reforms in Israel's public broadcast system, lamented the devolution of Israel's media system from one that had attempted to integrate society by creat-

ing a common ground to one that supports separatist cultures by reinforcing particularistic identities. While the traditional Habermasian model of a singular public sphere has provided the rationale for such positions in the defense of public broadcasting, we need to question whether this can or should be the model when attempting to understand whom public service television is meant to serve.

Habermas' (1989) by now well-known model of the public sphere as a place for ongoing rational-critical debate about the general rules that govern society, together with his analysis of the press's role in mediating this public discussion, made a strong argument for the way in which modern societies constitute themselves through the media. Almost contrary to his main argument, which privileges face to face discussion, his model reminds us that conversation mediated on a public level is, in fact, the primary form of democratic conversation in modern societies (Garnham, 1992; Schudson, 1997).

Notwithstanding Habermas' claims, we might want to think of a more inclusive public sphere where other forms of expression are also presented in public, e.g., feeling, inclination, needs and desires (Young, 1987; Aronowitz, 1993; Fraser, 1992). Such an understanding suggests that a variety of forms of mediated information, including entertainment, play a role in forming the public sphere (Carpignano, Andersen, Aronowitz, & DiFazio, 1993) and contribute to what is considered meaningful public discussion. Likewise, while Habermas' model predicates a single public sphere that increasingly enfranchises those previously excluded, other scholars have posited the idea of multiple public spheres (Keane, 1995) based on differences within society according to class (Negt & Kluge, 1993) or identity (Fraser, 1992; Warner, 1992). These 'counter-publics' (Fraser, 1992) can be thought of as fields of discourse that help members define themselves for themselves and for others in society. Such a model is more flexible, fluid and ephemeral than the type of public sphere Habermas described, and thus calls for a new role for public television.

While recognizing difference, this revised model still concedes the idea that dialogue between various publics is possible. However, in a multiply-divided society such as Israel, we must question whether public conversation based on difference can occur, and if it does what form that takes. Israel has been called a multi-cleaved society (Horowitz & Lissak, 1989) where various groups maintain separate institutional and territorial bases (Kimmerling, 1999). In such a society, where segments of the population control their own separate and mostly autonomous educational systems, communication networks, and cultural institutions, and maintain different kinds of authorities and leadership (Kimmerling, 1999), a better model of the public sphere might be what Rajagopal (2001) has termed a 'split public.' This concept refers to the idea that the public sphere is actually comprised of a variety of publics that relate to each other in different forms, and from distinct positions of domination and subordination. These splits are seen at the lines of fracture. There are evident differences between elite discourses and more popular ones,

between mainstream electronic media and alternative (often print) media, and among the several print publics that exist as a result of linguistic and cultural differences. An alternative model forces us to reconsider the place and purpose of public service broadcasting as the central mediator of society. In this chapter I suggest we need to investigate the limitations of the older models of communication in order to accommodate public service broadcasting in view of contemporary social, political and economic dynamics that are characteristically associated with division, fragmentation and conflict.

From monopoly to multiplicity

The shift from a monopoly broadcast system to a more pluralistic system was a long time coming in Israel, with a variety of ramifications for the population. Television came relatively late to Israel. Channel 1, Israel's public television station, debuted in 1968 under the authority of the newly established Israel Broadcasting Authority (IBA), a public entity established by the government (Blondheim, 1998). TV was seen by politicians as the educator of the "scattered masses" of Jews from around the world, as well as a defense against "Arab propaganda" aimed at the newly occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza (Oren, 2004; Gotliffe, 1981). In line with this patriotic and paternalistic perspective, the Israeli broadcasting system was seen by the government as a central tool for and means of building the nation and informing the citizenry. Despite the growth in leisure time and calls to release the monopolistic control of the media that the state enjoyed, this was the system for nearly twenty years (Blondheim, 1998).

There exist many similarities between Israel's media arrangement and that of various western European countries. Israel became a member of the European Broadcasting Union in 1957 and, like many European countries (Britain, Denmark and Germany to name a few), Israel's public broadcasting system enjoys semi-independence from the government and was financed through a combination of taxes and licensing fees, rather than through advertising. As Etzioni-Halevy (1987) has suggested, while the legal framework governing the Israel Broadcasting Authority was modeled largely on that of the BBC, parallels are difficult to discern when considering the social and political environment in which the IBA has developed. As she maintains, the ambiguous legal arrangements among the government, the Board of Directors, the Director General and the employees created an environment marked by a high degree of conflicting political pressures, periods of chaotic leadership and comparative internal autonomy for workers.

By the early 1990s, sweeping changes were underway in Israel's telecommunications environment. IBA's Channel 1, Israel's sole channel less than a decade prior, was besieged by a profusion of cable television channels from both local and transnational sources (Blondheim, 1998; Caspi & Limor, 1999).

Furthermore, in November 1993, a second commercial network was inaugurated. It was only with the addition of this second broadcast channel, totally financed through advertising, that many parties realized the threat to the public service channel.

As in many European countries, while there was an increasingly prevalent 'free market' discourse that extolled deregulation, privatization and liberalization of the media (Boyd-Barret, 1997), there were simultaneous fears that the development of cable and other technologies would only lead to American domination of the local culture (Mattelart, 2000). While such a position oversimplifies the complex ways in which individuals actually relate to media, it reminds us that this competition has in many ways affected the way that national broadcasters think about their audiences (Ang, 1991). Compounding all of this, Israeli society was undergoing great changes, partly demographic and partly political, which were interpreted by some as a type of national liberation, but by many others as a hostile threat to the nation.

Changes within the IBA

With the Labor Party's victory over Likud in 1992, the promise of political, social and economic change emerged in all social realms. As had been customary in Israel, the new administration appointed a new Director General of the IBA. Moti Kirshenbaum, a professional with a long history at Channel 1 both as a director and producer of satirical programs and as a manager of news and special interest programming, brought with him a new way of doing television in Israel. Kirshenbaum was seen by most within the industry not simply as another political appointee, but rather as a highly qualified and trained professional who could bring change to what was becoming a listless channel.

Kirshenbaum began his tenure at the same time that Channel 2 was launched. Although cable had been established in 1988 and enjoyed a penetration of up to seventy percent by 1993, because of its reliance on foreign programming it had not been thought of as competition, and instilled little fear in the executives at the IBA. Until this time, Channel 1's programming primarily consisted of the daily hour-long evening news, together with political discussion shows, documentaries, and talk shows. The rest of its programming fare was mainly national sporting events – primarily basketball and football – along with locally-produced and imported sit-coms, dramas and movies. Hence, Channel 2, with its local production of news and entertainment, was considered a direct threat to Channel 1's mandate and position. The launching of Channel 2 caught everyone at IBA off guard. With the political changes at the time, and the changes in leadership at the IBA in the same year, there was little for Israel's public television to do but react to the developing environment.

Among initial reactions, programming practices changed at the public station. Like many of its European counterparts who had faced this competition earlier (see, e.g., Avery, 1993), executives scrambled to become more efficient. For instance, rather than simply sub-contracting production as in the past, the channel began to buy externally produced programs. To compete with top-rated locally produced shows on Channel 2, Channel 1 imported more foreign blockbuster films. Most importantly, competition forced Channel 1 to elaborate a more aggressive and coherent programming schedule altogether, where professional decision making trumped personal preferences.

Tkuma and the rise of 'quality programs'

Despite the threat many executives felt at Channel 1, they also saw great opportunity. The tension created as a result of competition between public and commercial television would compel executives to formulate a new understanding of public television's role in Israeli society. As one of the IBA executives at the time suggested, "in the beginning Channel 2 was a hard blow to Channel 1. The audience punished Channel 1."

Assessments of what distinguished Channel 1 indicated mainly factual and discussion programming, i.e. news, documentaries and political talk shows. Although news and current affairs had always been part of the line-up, such programming was invested with new meaning. This would be the anchors for what was now deemed "quality programming." IBA executives wanted Channel 1 to be seen as 'serious' – whether it presented entertainment, news programs or documentaries. With the establishment of a commercial broadcast system and increasing calls for privatization of the IBA, executives were under pressure to define themselves for the Israeli public.

As part of these programming changes, both the managing director of the IBA and the programming manager were thinking of innovative ways of leveraging Channel 1's experiences. Early on and with a sense of mission, the Programming Director proposed an idea for a documentary series that would celebrate Israel's Jubilee in 1998, called *Tkuma* [The Rebuilding], to the Director of Channel 1, the Director of Documentaries and the Director General of the IBA. Quickly adopted, the production of the twenty-two part series would, over the course of the next five years, be seen as the benchmark for public television's role in Israeli society.

Tkuma was conceived as the type of quality production needed to differentiate Channel 1. Through productions like *Tkuma*, executives hoped to prove the station's worth. As the Program Director said, the objective of the series was "First of all, to make the 50th year a spectacle and a spectacle that is fitting for a public channel... The basic interest was to produce something exceptional." By airing *Tkuma*, executives sought to firmly establish Channel 1 in contemporary Israeli culture. It was clear to all within the IBA that

Israelis would never get such a remarkable program about the nation's history from cable stations that primarily programmed foreign content, or from the new commercial station that was mainly offering entertainment with advertisements.

While the goals of the IBA executives and producers of *Tkuma* was to promote multiple viewpoints about Israel's history by giving voice to various ethnic and religious groups, the management's outlook about the audience, combined with the pressure from commercial television, belied many of these good intentions. Perhaps for the first time, stories about the religious, the secular, the old-timers, the immigrants from both Europe and Asia/Africa, and the Palestinians were to be told within the same media space. In line with this objective, various directors would be responsible for producing individual segments. But they were never allowed to stray too far from the stringent guidance of the executive producers and, thus, despite this openness to difference, both the initial proposal for the series and the general guidelines for the directors demanded that all expressions of diversity be subsumed under the framework of conveying a collective story that would instill a sense of national pride.

This development of national identity lies at the base of the Israeli public channel's mandate. As stated by law, the IBA's responsibilities include reflecting the life of the State, propagating good citizenship, and promoting Hebrew and Israeli creativity (Schejter, 1995). As Tasha Oren (2004) has suggested, the central preoccupation about cultural integration among Israeli politicians and public figures at the time of the authority's establishment was actually the impetus for the development of television in Israel and was therefore inscribed in its institutional logic. Although the specific program goal was to articulate differences, the desire for social cohesion was a difficult ethos to overcome.

Quality versus ratings

While the series was seen as important to the nation, it was also essential for the station to prove its own importance. However, like other programs Channel 1 would develop, this importance would not be judged based on ratings but rather on the 'seriousness' of the products it produced. Rather than simply investing heavily in programs that could guarantee high ratings, executives emphasized the quality programming that only Channel 1 could offer because it was not beholden to commercial interests. Seriousness thus became the 'quality' rubric by which executives of Israel's public television were attempting to differentiate themselves from their competitors.

This new discourse about quality was especially important at a time when Channel 1 was drastically losing the ratings war. By the third season of broadcast (1995), the commercial channel, with popular entertainment shows, game shows, locally produced comedies and drama series, as well as hyped-

up news programs, proved itself to be the main player on the Israeli scene. Channel 2 screened the thirty most popular programs on television and enjoyed ratings that were twenty-five percent higher than programs aired on Channel 1 (Caspi & Limor, 1999). On the defensive, executives contrasted quality with ratings in an attempt to short-circuit discourse that began to question public broadcasting's validity in a pluralistic media environment.

Hence, ratings came to be seen as something that commercial television was interested in. IBA executives looked abroad to British and American public service television as models for quality production. As the director of programming at the time reasoned, "Public television needs to produce things. What ratings does the BBC or WGBH series on the Millennium get? Nothing. So what! Was it a bad series? They made a good series. This is our only responsibility." From this perspective, the only responsibility of a public service station was to produce good programs for the Israeli public. Professional quality standards of television production would determine what was deemed 'good.' Considering that many of the executives had been working for a television channel that until recently did not have to answer to issues of ratings, but only in vague terms of service to the nation-state, the emphasis on professional standards seemed logical.

Despite the apparent disregard for ratings and the emphasis on Channel 1 as a broadcaster of quality programming, executives recognized that ratings were important. As one of executive put it:

Moti [Kirshenbaum] used to say "we look at the ratings, but we don't live by the ratings". But believe me, when the numbers started getting bad, everybody was very depressed, even though there was no reason for that...It's true that we don't want to broadcast to no viewers, that's idiotic...But still, the issue is not competition...when Dudu Topaz [a popular entertainment figure] left for channel two, he could get ten thousand dollars for an episode...And Moti said, 'I would pay him another ten thousand dollars just to make sure he stays there.' And that was his way of saying, this is not something we're supposed to do.

Ratings and popular programming could not simply be dismissed because the IBA executives knew they were being judged according to the numbers. Hence, this ambivalence about ratings expressed itself in a bifurcated perspective: while some programs, like imported blockbuster movies, were aired in order to produce higher ratings, other programs, like *Tkuma*, were part of the new logic of quality television.

With this ambivalence, a tension developed which went beyond programming decisions within Channel 1. It came to define the relationship between Channel 1 and other media outlets, as well. Light entertainment was chiefly the domain of commercial television while serious programs were produced to achieve 'quality.' Hence, in exchange for the new seriousness that was taking shape within Channel 1, the need to supply light programming was

relinquished to the new commercial channel. As one executive commented, “We knew that we had a mission ... we all knew we were doing public television. We gave up the soccer. We gave up Dudu Topaz. We...put a lot of hours into the news.” At the same time that it was hoped Channel 1 would invigorate a culture of rational public debate, the commercial channel was seen as airing locally produced prime time soap operas. As serious programming replaced popular fare on the public service channel, the bar was raised for the audience, who, while they might enjoy Dudu Topaz, would not become better citizens by watching his program.

This attitude had historical precedence in Israel. Television’s late arrival in Israel was a result of the fear of television’s potential to lay to waste a burgeoning Jewish/Israeli culture (Oren, 2004). Thus, we see the remnants of the older mandate for broadcasting transformed into a new parlance. Earlier, questions had not been addressed in terms of ratings or professionalism, but rather in terms of what was best for the nation. The idea of ‘quality programming’ was an alternative still deeply rooted in this ethos: “quality” became a euphemism for that which was good for the nation. Programs that were produced simply for the ratings, i.e., entertaining and commercial fare, presumably did nothing to benefit the nation.

The problem of quality in a multicultural context

Quality wasn’t judged by artistic merit alone, but rather, strategically in contradistinction to what commercial media offered. As one executive put it, “the whole idea of public television in the western European tradition is that it is central to society...so it has to have some kind of grand appeal.” Grand appeal did not mean appeal to large numbers of people; it meant appealing to “the nation” as a whole. That was implicitly rather than explicitly defined in ways that reflected the taste preferences of those at the IBA helm, and thus understood as citizens like them.

In reassessing their role, executives envisioned a two-tiered system of television—one elite, the other for the *Amcha* [a pejorative Hebrew term meaning “the people”]. As Kirshenbaum stated:

So all the wisdom is to create a balance between programs for which you don’t pay homage to the rating, that you don’t have to do according to ratings because you are financed by the Agara, and so if the ratings are low its worth doing them and you need to do them because that’s what is called a public channel. It has the luxury of creating for the fortunate few. Not only for the masses, not only to the widest common camp. So you have programs like these. And there are programs that you say that you do need to pay homage to the rating.

While the serious programs (news, documentaries, and docudramas) were intended for what Kirshenbaum himself called “the fortunate few,” the lighter fare was meant for all the rest.

With this division, public television’s new mission to produce quality programs for the nation would bring it in direct conflict with the desire to use public television to mediate a diverse range of perspectives. The binary division that the executives developed between elites and masses could not be translated into a multicultural perspective (see e.g., Shohat & Stam, 1994). Hence, IBA ideas about quality programs must be seen as a retreat into what is an essentially elitist position. Questions as to who actually makes up the audience (or the nation), or why they preferred shows such as Dudu Topaz’s to so-called quality programming, were never posed, much less critically addressed.

IBA executives believed Channel 1 was fulfilling its mandate by devoting itself to the intellectually mature and discerning citizenry. Those viewers who wanted to waste their time on entertainment could do so elsewhere; but in doing so it was *they* who failed the nation. As one executive suggested:

Now, after the founding of Channel 2 ... a new culture started, more celebrity, lighter, the programs...were of the type for children. Phisphusim [hidden camera] is the classic example. To put a program like this on Friday night comes from the perception that the audience is...that they’re children. Channel 1 felt that the audience is an audience of adults.

Executives were, with a heavy heart, ready to abandon the child-like audience that wanted to watch what commercial television produced. This paternalistic attitude was justified by them as an evaluation of the audience as citizens, not merely as viewers. If one were not adult enough (i.e., a good enough citizen) to watch Channel 1, he could always watch something else. Hence, the “mature” audience became the target for a rejuvenated Israeli public television.

Part of the reason for this dual-optic for understanding the audience was the seeming inability of most executives to see beyond their own respective and distinct positions within Israeli culture, and their own attendant ideas of how Israeli culture and quality television should be defined. While programs such as *Tkuma* embraced the ideas of Israel’s multiculturalism, it was difficult for some of the executives to understand that their own positions regarding culture were based in a particular class and social position within the power structure. As one of the executives mentioned when discussing the Israeli audience:

Once there was research that showed that a large part of the population does not understand what they were watching on television news. Now the language that I write, for example, is too high for the audience. But this has been a problem for the State of Israel from the day of its founding...In one broad-

cast, you have to determine a very high bar, and people need to join it. You can't lower yourself from the sense that some of the people understand more, some understand less, but you determine the standard.

So the positions held by executives became the standard viewers were supposed to measure up to. However, their perception of quality television was largely guided by non-indigenous standards these executives developed in university studies abroad, their professional interactions with Western European broadcast organizations, and their personal tastes for cultural products produced by the BBC (Britain) and PBS (America). For all intents and purposes, an elite minority view was simply posited as the universal, enlightened position.

Of course such a view obviously dismisses the variety of positions held by many and different groups in Israeli society. "Those who understand less" would surely include the Russian and Ethiopian immigrants who moved to Israel en masse during the eighties and nineties, as well as large parts of the Mizrahi (eastern) community who came from Asia and North Africa in the fifties and sixties, not to mention the Palestinian Citizens of Israel.

Thus, reaching out to other groups through productions such as *Tkuma* is a form of what Henry Giroux (1994) called "empty pluralism," which differentiates the "other" but never makes the position of those in power visible. In this case, the established, secular, male, Ashkenazi position (which characterizes IBA executives) is taken as the universal position, although never actually annunciated as such. Real differences are erased in a manner that denies these executives' own unique positions. For instance, when the program director developed a program, he believed that "the target audience was everyone, without differences of religion, race, sex, nationality, ethnicity." Although wrapped in egalitarian rhetoric, the nation is presumably comprised of people just like him. While differences were acknowledged in productions such as *Tkuma*, ultimately these were not seen as sufficiently important to affect the way the nation was defined.

Such positions are well established in Israel, which was built on a strong sense of collective identity. From the pioneering days, it was important for individuals to sacrifice their individual needs to the burgeoning collective in the effort to build a Jewish state. As Tamar Katriel (1991) has poignantly explicated, establishing or asserting one's difference (something that all subaltern groups do) in Israel is seen as being essentially un-Israeli. She explains that by demarcating oneself, one is seen as sacrificing group integration and the consensus. Such a position hardly embraces an idea of multiculturalism that is based on acknowledging and accepting differences.

Thus, the new regime that drew a distinction between elite programming and popular programming allowed IBA executives to overlook the power relationships in society that establish these differences. They placed their interests, which were culturally and socially specific, at the center and disregarded other group interests – lumping them all together into "the com-

mon camp.” They did not even consider that perhaps other groups would have different definitions of quality, based on an alternative set of interests and perspectives. In producing for the “nation,” they were in practice really producing for their own social and cultural group without obvious awareness of that. Arguably, Israel is not alone in this. While the dynamics described throughout are idiosyncratic they point to a cultural dilemma faced by public service broadcasting as an institution at large.

Conclusions

Since 1998, the year that Kirshenbaum’s term ended, the issues for the IBA have grown more complicated. A third (advertising-supported) broadcast channel was added in 2000, leaving the IBA scrambling for an ever-shrinking audience. In addition, a return to politically determined appointments of IBA Director Generals has left channel 1 in disarray. The goal of ‘professionalism’ has largely reverted to earlier forms of political maneuvering and nepotism.

While Channel 2 is still largely seen to be producing superficial commercial fare, it has over the years provided cutting-edge and highly acclaimed programs as well. By supporting documentaries, dramas and news programs that have been devoted to topics of Israeli society that Channel 1 neglected to cover, Channel 2 has added pressure for the IBA to critically define its contemporary role as a public service broadcaster in a multi-channel environment. With this, the social and political milieu in Israel has also changed immensely. With decreasing hopes of peace with the Palestinians, increasing political tension and violence, and the outbreak of the second *Intifada* in 2000, a new wave of Israeli patriotism has swept all fields of cultural production. The critical stance that had developed as a result of emphasis on professional standards and which had become such an important part of Israeli culture during the nineties is now seen by many as a threat to the national consensus. In such an atmosphere, substantial criticism of the nation by subgroups such as the Palestinian Citizens of Israel, the *Mizrachim*, and even by many peace activists, would be less tolerated and is severely muted.

Although much is in transformation, this exploration of Israeli PSB in the mid-1990’s offers a window for rethinking the possibilities of public service television. Channel 1 executives were well aware of the changes developing in Israeli society – both in terms of new demands forced upon them via increased competition from commercial channels and also in terms of the growing call from various groups for a voice in the national debate. Their responses exhibit contradictory notions of the public. With productions like *Tkuma*, they acknowledged a wide range of peoples with differing view points. Their goal was to find a way to construct a certain common under-

standing. And yet they ultimately retreated into their own social and culture class positions. The elite-masses binary that they established had grouped together all those who would not be interested in the same types of programming the executives find interesting.

Perhaps a better model for public broadcasters in such fragmented environments could be based on what Shohat & Stam (2003) have called a “kaleidoscope framework of communities” to effectively deal with Israel’s fractured public sphere. Such a metaphor asks one to acknowledge the multipleness of a nation, where the unitary and the standard must give way to a polyphony of social and ethnic voices. This would require relinquishing control of some of the structures that determine what and how cultural products get made. Such a re-evaluation for development entails broadcasters coming to know their audiences not as they imagine them, or even merely in the form of abstract statistical data, but rather as real human beings capable of valid self expression. This intimate knowledge can only be developed through public debate about ethnicity, about difference, and about television – a debate that needs to begin within, and partly about, public service broadcasting. Those in positions of institutional power could initiate such a debate by reaching out to groups that have been disenfranchised, inviting them to voice their needs, their desires, and their ways of communicating. Unless and until that happens, public television cannot actually serve as a cultural commons today. It can only instead serve the common interests of particular and normative cultural groups.

Note

1. All quotes, unless otherwise indicated, are from interviews conducted by the author in the Spring of 2003. These interviews with IBA executives, Channel 1 executives, and both full-time and freelance producers and directors were carried out as part of the author’s dissertation fieldwork.

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PSB LEGITIMACY IN CONTENT AND FUNCTIONS

The Meaning of *Broadcasting* in the Digital Era

Paddy Scannell

Twenty years ago the Peacock Report on *The Financing of Broadcasting* endorsed direct consumer choice, assumed that subscription would eventually replace the license fee, and ended with the hope that Britain would soon “reach a position where the mystique is taken out of broadcasting and it becomes no more special than publishing became once the world became used to living with the printing press” (HMSO, 1986: para. 711, p. 151). It reluctantly concluded that public service broadcasting [PSB] was defensible as a corrective to market failure in commercial television services because it provided those special ‘minority’ programmes of cultural value that commercial TV failed to supply. Peacock was the first Parliamentary Committee of Enquiry into British broadcasting led by an economist (Sir Alan Peacock) and written in the language of economics. The vocabulary and concepts of Peacock define the terms in which the new regulatory authority, Ofcom, deals with broadcasting today.

The enquiry into the funding of the BBC was partly driven by political animus because Margaret Thatcher disliked the BBC and the principle it represented. It was also driven by the genuine problem of justifying the license fee in a new television age of multi-channel services, just around the corner, that would vastly extend consumer choice beyond the four national services then available (BBC1 and 2, ITV and Ch4). But what happened? Not a plethora of TV channels in a noisy marketplace of competition, but rather the emergence in the 1990s of a new ‘big beast’ in the British media landscape – BSkyB. Today the two key players, in the business of TV and radio provision, are the BBC and Sky.

In this essay I want set aside the economic and policy issues concerning the regulation of broadcasting today – matters of immediate concern in the UK at this moment, with the BBC’s charter under review – and try to think of what essentially broadcasting means today, and whether it matters any more. It is no longer a question of public service versus the market, I suggest, but of whether broadcasting is a relevant way of delivering services in today’s world. Digital technologies, satellite and cable delivery systems and

the new media (the extraordinary growth, in less than ten years, of the Internet and world wide web) pose the challenge today: has broadcasting in *any* form a future in the so-called digital age of the 21st century?

Broadcasting as dissemination

We should remember that 'broadcasting' is an old, rural term that found a new technological application and meaning in the early 20th century. It was used to describe the transmission effect of wireless telephony, a technology that extended wired telephony by providing links between two transmission-reception points without the necessity of lines (above or below ground or water) to make the connection. In point-to-point communication – the original intentional application – the side-effect of transmission (that anyone else within range of reception and with adequate receiving equipment could also pick it up) was a minus rather than a plus. The general social application of the technology for informational and entertainment purposes was discovered in the 1920s when wireless *broadcasting* began. John Durham Peters has recently reminded us of the true force and significance of this word by reconnecting it to Christ's parable of The Sower which he takes as the paradigm for communication as *dissemination* in contrast with the other great communicative paradigm of *dialogue*, exemplified by the discourse and method of Socrates (Peters, 1999).

Historically it is clear that radio was conceived as a technology for extending dialogue, but discovered its true communicative role as broadcast dissemination. Dialogue is a personal two-way interaction between people. Dissemination is an impersonal one-to-many one-way system of communication. To broadcast, before radio, meant to scatter seed abroad. Christ stands before a large anonymous crowd, gathered on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and tells them a story. The Sower goes out one day to scatter his seed: some falls on stony ground and is pecked up by the birds of the air; some falls among thorns and is choked as soon as it springs up; some falls on shallow soil, springs up quickly but soon withers and dies. And some falls on fertile soil and yields a good harvest; thirty fold, sixty fold, a hundredfold. The story is, of course, Christ's discourse on his own method as a teacher, on what he is doing even as he speaks to the assembled crowd.

Socrates, Peters tells us, argued for insemination as more virtuous than dissemination. Insemination is to implant the seed in another where it will bear fruit. Dissemination is like the sin of Onan who spilled his seed upon the ground. It is a wasteful scatter for there is no guarantee that the seed will, in due course, bear fruit. Put like this, Christ's method of communication is scandalously inefficient. But that, Peters stunningly argues, is its disinterested kindness and generosity. The parable of the sower makes manifest, in its form as much as its message, that the love of God (*agape*) is in-

discriminately available for all, not just the few that are open and receptive to the Word. Broadcasting is a fundamentally democratic form of communication. But more than this, and crucially, it is like the love of God in that it is non-reciprocal. It gives without any expectation of a return. It neither expects nor requires acknowledgement and thanks. It is one-way and unconditional and for anyone and everyone anywhere anytime. It *cannot* be reciprocated. This is the blessing of broadcast communication and its indiscriminate scatter. Peters, then, offers two paradigms of communication; one, a dialogue of intimacy and reciprocity, the other of indiscriminate mass dissemination. It is a contrast between two kinds of love, *eros* and *agape*: human and divine, non-transcendent and transcendent, personal and impersonal, individual and social, present and absent, embodied and disembodied, immediate and mediated.

In Britain the public service model of broadcasting was understood, from its beginning, in terms of Christ's parable. Broadcasting House, the home of the BBC from 1932, has a famous sculpture over the entrance of Prospero and Ariel. Inside, in the foyer, there is another less well known carving by the same Catholic sculptor, Eric Gill, of *The Sower*. The key feature of the British model from the start, its core commitment, was to the universal dissemination of its radio service as an inclusive public good. Public service has been, and remains to this day, the dominant and still valued means whereby truly *broadcast* services are delivered in Britain and other Northern European countries. Nor does it exist in isolation from other public services – health and education. The continuing political will of electorates to support such services, in spite of the neo-Conservative challenge of the 1980s, indicates the direction taken by Britain and other northern European countries since the 2nd World War as one that favours *social* democracy. The USA of course has favoured a different version of democracy; one that is strongly libertarian, that favours individual endeavour, that rejects central government and is suspicious of any notion of the public good. The wholly marginal position of public service broadcasting in the USA (an audience share of 2% and largely dependent on voluntary donations) is indicative of this.

Broadcasting, as the parable and Peters make quite clear, is wasteful, inefficient communication. But is that a blessing or a curse? From the start less wasteful and more efficient methods of distribution have been sought, by those who regard radio and television as a business like any other, that target only paying customers: pay-per-channel, ideally pay-per-view, *narrowcasting*, in short. The political demand, in the UK today, to justify public services in economic terms is, while understandable (value for taxpayers' money must be demonstrated), in the end paradoxical. The reasons and justifications for public services are, ultimately, ethical and political; they are concerned with what we think a good society should be like and the political form it should take. They are underpinned by a commitment to common goods. Economic rationality is normatively thought in terms of individual goods – profit is private, and rational choice theory presupposes self-

interest as its start and end point. It may help to rationalise the delivery of common goods, preventing waste and corruption, but it can never justify them. Americans are cynical about their radio and television services because they see them simply as businesses and, therefore, exploitative. They treat their media, to paraphrase de Tocqueville, as kings do their courtiers: they enrich and despise them. A viable public sector, of which broadcasting is a part, presupposes as the condition of its existence, trust in the political institutions of public life and those who serve them. Democracy does not depend on public trust for it has many forms, but the particular form of democracy that has developed in Northern Europe clearly does.

Broadcasting and liveness

Radio and television are time based media. It is 'empty' time that is filled by their schedules and time that is consumed in listening and watching. The very first weekly publication of the BBC in 1923 was *Radio Times* and it's still on sale today. What are the times of radio? Sylviane Agacinski made the point beautifully:

We cannot speak of *the* time, as if it were homogeneous, unifiable by a single measure and a single history. There are different orders of temporality (corresponding to the *tempos* of various events) just as there are different orders of historicity.

Today, the universal clocks are the audio-visual media, and the *clock-radio* is the object that best represents the takeover, the makeover, of the clock. Indeed, this object is not a simple means for being awoken by music or the morning news; it is the concrete sign that we live *in the time of the radio*, *in the time of the media* and their programs. (Agancinski, 2003:46-7. [Original emphases])

Agacinski contrasts the time of the media with older historical temporalities – the rhythm of the sun, the seasons, the harvest. But really the time of the media stands in contrast to the time of the masses; industrial, factory time whose coercive, punitive and disciplinary character was fully explored by Edward Thompson (1963) long before Foucault wrote *Discipline and Punish*. The time of the media means, in the first place, time *for* the media. Societies of which daily radio and television services are an integral part have of necessity risen above subsistence economies and the realm of necessity. They bespeak a world in which the 'silent majorities' have at the very least a marginal surplus of money and time to spend on the purchase and use of radio and television sets as pastimes. The transition from the time of the masses to the time of the media depended on the decisive world-shattering, world-transforming event of the last century; the 1939-45 war, the historical hinge of the 20th century.

Let's say, to simplify greatly, that in the first half of the 20th century it seemed as if human beings existed to serve the tremendous apparatuses (economic, political, technological, cultural) that dominated their lives, threatened the liquidation of their individuality and produced them as the silent, passive, manipulated masses. This was the world of mass production, mass politics and mass culture – the time of the masses. At the end of the 20th century this world had disappeared. *That* is the real meaning of post-modernism. The transition from Fordism to post-Fordism, as the British Left saw it in the 1980s, signalled 'The end of the masses' (Hall & Jacques, 1989; Hebdige, 1989). Raymond Williams had noted this much earlier, in the 1950s, when the decisive, silent transformation began: "There are no masses any more, there are only other people".

In the 1950s a new conception of culture began to appear at exactly the same time as a new politics¹ and an economy geared to the production of domestic appliances or consumer durables. The 1950s is the key decade of the second half of the last century: in it we see emerging a new historical phenomenon called 'everyday life'. This is the beginning of 'the age of television' and the time of the media, in which time no longer dominates and oppresses individuals but begins to be something that they manage and occasionally enjoy as part of their ordinary, everyday life. To understand this time is to grapple with the meaning of *live* broadcast radio and television which is intimately entwined in the historical emergence of everyday life as a particularising order of historical time.

We experience the *liveness* of broadcasting in the immediate now of the particular programme; the soccer match, say, or the news. But that is an effect of something larger and more difficult to grasp; namely the times of the schedules and the temporality of every day life. The day is a natural order of time (it is not a human invention like hours and minutes). Each day has an immanent structure, rhythm and tempo around which human life, even today, remains adjusted. Light and darkness; waking and sleeping; morning, noon and night: a natural order of time that is both linear and irreversible and infinitely cyclical and repetitive. Each day goes through the same cycle as every other day. Human life is 'naturally' in the first place, and historically and culturally in the second place adjusted to the rhythm and cycle of days. Today we live in the order of days just as other cultures in other times lived in the order of the seasons: the time to sow and the time to reap. The days of our lives have a natural arc of morning, noon and night which is the storyable arc of our own existence too. Life and days are inextricably folded into each other and show up in the schedules of the broadcast day in which the *historic* and *future* present show up in relation to each other in the *immediate* present of live-to-air transmissions.

The future present shows up as a set of expectations at the beginning of each day. Start-of-day news, and indeed all early morning live-to-air programmes on radio and television, are not just *at* that time but *for* that time. In all sorts of ways a rolling three-hour news and discussion programme,

such as the aptly named *Today* on BBC Radio 4 that starts at six a.m. each weekday morning, is concerned with the day ahead and all the upcoming and ongoing issues that will mark Today as this day in particular. The routine, recurring time-checks, weather and traffic reports provide relevant data that allow listeners to orient themselves to and prepare for the day ahead. End-of-day news (BBC1, *News at Ten*) looks back on what was anticipated in start-of-day news. It brings the events of the-day-now-past into the present in its live-to-air reports and interviews. This is the retrospective historic present, concerned with what has just-now happened and what it meant. It too exists in and for its own and particular time-of-day. It summarises, assesses and, where appropriate, brings closure to the now-ending day. The weather reports that immediately follow nightly news are oriented to tomorrow. News junkies, who switch to *Newsnight* (BBC 2: 10.30 p.m.) after the news, know that they will get further discussion and comment on the events of the day. The programme always ends with a brief look at tomorrow's newspaper headline stories, thereby indicating closure and renewal – back to the future!

Thus routinely, day by day, the broadcasting schedule articulates and expresses each day in its prospective and retrospective character – its ontology of expectations, its assessments of whether they were met – in the live momentum of the phenomenal now from morning through to night. If we can meaningfully speak of radio and television as part of our lives it is because (and only because) their services articulate the existential structure of the days of our lives while at the same time connecting each and all of us, day in day out, to the life of the world in its manifest, manifold diversity. This double articulation of life (my life linked to the life of the world) is endlessly reiterated in news and other programmes in the course of each and every day as we and broadcasting move through it from morning to night. This is the unobtrusive world-historical character of television and radio broadcasting today and it depends upon the fact that it is *live*.

Underpinning all this is a continuing interactive conversation between the broadcasters and their audiences. Broadcast radio and television services in fact combine Peters' two communicative paradigms of dialogue and dissemination. They *talk* continuously to their viewers and listeners; not just in news programmes and all studio based talk, quiz, game and people programmes, but in the crucial in-between continuity segments that segue from one programme to another, that point to future programmes, that forecast the weather and so forth. The relationship through the day and from day to day between broadcasters and audiences is essentially a real-time *communicative* relationship realised in talk – the universal communicative medium of everyday life. Each and every listener or viewer encounters this as an aspect of their own experience; as if broadcasting spoke to, in each case, me. At the same time, each knows that what we have seen and heard has also been seen and heard, at exactly the same time and in the same way, by countless others. Each and all of us has a communicative entitlement to speak of what we have witnessed

in live broadcasting, which thereby creates the conditions of common experiences as the basis of the formation of public opinions and tastes.

BSkyB as a media superstore

Most work on audiences concentrates on their responses to this or that particular programme. Less attention has been given to the experience of listening and watching as such. I want to consider for a moment the experience of watching BSkyB's digital satellite service in order to compare it with that of broadcast television as I have just described it. At the heart of Sky's extraordinary success in the last ten years is the way in which it has brought order to chaos and tidied up the experience of access to the new world of multi-channel television and radio. The key to the Sky experience is the Electronic Program Guide [EPG]. In the early days of satellite television you could access lots of different channels, but they came up randomly, you had no idea what you were looking at or what their schedule was. You would hit many channels that were either a snow-blizzard or encrypted so you hadn't a clue what they were (apart from the heavy breathing). Watching satellite television was a frustrating hit and miss experience to which the EPG was a brilliant technological solution.

The EPG functions like a home-shopping catalogue. It provides clear, easy and fast access to any of the one thousand television and radio channels on the menu. When you turn on, the initial display screen offers 10 options: all channels, entertainment, movies, sport, news, kids, music and radio, specialist, A-Z and personal planner. With the buttons of the remote (a key part of the technology) you can quickly toggle through to the channel you want. A text-frame at the bottom of the screen – it disappears after ten seconds – tells you the date and time, the channel and the title of the programme as well as displaying various interactive options. At any time you can check what's coming up next and, indeed, the schedule for the rest of the day. Channel browsing is very easy and you always know where you are and what you're looking at. The many hundreds of channels have been sorted and stacked together: God? Sex? Sport? Music? Travel? Shopping? DIY? Gambling? All these and much more have been conveniently grouped together, the way goods are stacked and displayed in the supermarket: this aisle for dairy products, that for meat and so on. Once you get used to the EPG, just as once you know where things are in the supermarket, browsing through them is a comfortable experience.

But the EPG is a highly sophisticated piece of equipment that allows much more than easy channel browsing. It is essentially an interactive device for the customisation of viewing. You can identify and mark your own channel favourites so you can call them up directly. You can earmark a particular programme you want to see later and get a reminder when it's time to

watch it. And the live channels have a red button which brings up an interactive menu that offers a range of alternative choices to what's on screen; particularly useful for news and sports programmes.

The latest refinement is Sky+ which adds a DVR (digital video recorder) and other technical goodies to the basic Sky package. The DVR needs no tape, for the hard drive of the digibox can hold up to 20 hours of recorded material (60 hours on Sky+ 160) that you can arrange as you wish into your own viewing schedule. You can record two other channels simultaneously. You can record a whole series – the Series Link feature will do this automatically and avoid recording repeats and omnibus editions. While watching live programmes – Sky News, say, or a live game on a premium sports channel (for which you pay extra) – you can pause them to answer the phone or whatever and you can if you wish, fast-forward when you return to catch up with the action in real time or carry on from where you stopped. You can also rewind whenever you want: instant replays on demand. Sky's core concept is personalised viewing; the perfection of individual consumer choice that the Peacock Report dreamt of. Sky+ adds the refinement of flexitime; viewing in your own time as well as the power to stop and reverse time in live programmes. Sky offers a supermarket conception of the meaning of choice, attuned to late 20th century post-modern post-industrial lifestyles that have become increasingly individualised.

Sky is very clever and very successful. It makes television something you can customise to your convenience in much the same way that you can customise your own favourite music selections with MP3s. As such it is the antithesis of traditional broadcast services. It has the effect of privatising the experience of radio and television. First, and crucially, it destroys the significance of the schedules which are rendered strictly meaningless: that is to say, the time at which any programme appears has no particular point, nor any meaning in relation to any other programme. Thereby the channels themselves become largely redundant. They are simply time-stores in which individual programmes of a certain kind (sport, music, sex) are held. What counts is the huge diversity of programmes on offer. From all the channels available you pick the programmes that you want, to watch at leisure. It is convenience television based on individual customer sovereignty and choice. It removes the experience of television from public time into the private times of private individuals. The Sky experience is always in *my* time. The time of the world has disappeared.

The defining characteristic of broadcasting is its worldliness, which is the hidden meaning of *publicness*. I have tried to show this as the effect of live-to-air transmission which creates a spanned and gathered *now* that brings together into the public worldly time of the programme all who watch and listen. In this common, public time the common experience of a common world is created. We experience this with sometimes shattering intensity in great events or disasters, but such exceptional moments depend upon the routine structure of schedules attuned to the existential arc of days and a

continuing communicative dialogue between broadcasters and their listeners and viewers – the two distinguishing characteristics of live broadcast public services. With Sky you create your own television time from a large and diverse supply of programmes available for you to pick and mix. With BBC services you attune your time to the times of broadcasting and the time of the world. Sky digital makes television a personal life-style accessory. Broadcasting makes it part of your daily life connected day by day to the life of the world.

I have mainly been concerned with television but it's important not to forget radio which is arguably the more important broadcast medium of daily life. Radio listening in the last few years has increased a little, while viewing has correspondingly declined. More people listen to radio in Britain each day than watch television. The unique communicative affordance of radio is that you don't have to stop doing other things and watch it as you must with television. Radio allows us all to do at least two things at once: to listen and get up and dressed, and drive to work, and work at the computer, and cook or do the housework or go to bed and read. The structure of daily listening (with its early morning and drive-time peaks) compared with that of viewing confirms that radio is a through-the-day medium whereas television is what it has always been, essentially an evening leisure time activity – at least for the working population. Radio today is the primary communicative medium of daily life because it is more accessibly and intimately connected to the daily time-routines of the working week while television is more attuned to the pleasures of the weekend. And in the UK there's no doubt that BBC radio services have a much more distinctively public service character than its television services. Thus, in thinking about PSB today it is important to unbundle radio and television, to recognise their differences and that people use them differently, at different times of day and for different purposes. One is not more important than the other. It is the combination of both that matters for us.

The meaning of publicness

Broadcasting then is the sum of radio and television, and therefore greater than what each part offers individually. Yet public discussion today of the future of PSB as the BBC's charter is under review is focused exclusively in terms of television. What escapes recognition and acknowledgement is that both mediums are important in people's daily lives in different ways and at different times. But people are never discussed by the policy wonks. Their talk is always of citizen-consumers – a convenient ideological fiction that suits the politicians (with talk of citizens) and the economists in Ofcom (with talk of consumers). Real people do not conceive of themselves as either as they watch and listen. That has been my concern: the experience of radio and television today and what it means for people as an aspect of their lives.

It is natural enough to think of the experience of radio and television in terms of the programmes that we listen to and watch. Public discussion of PSB today is very much in terms of trying to identify (and then to protect) certain kinds of programme that have some added 'public value'; documentaries, religious, ethnic minority and children's programmes, 'serious' drama. These are the terms in which Ofcom sets the agenda for discussion. But it misses the essential point about the meaning of PSB.

It is *not* just, or in the first place, about programme content. Obviously any television service must somehow supply a content. But the key question is: What determines the content supplied? And the answer very much depends on how the supplier conceives of those for whom the contents of the services are intended. To conceive of the recipient as a consumer (as Post-Peacock debate in the UK does unquestioningly) is to change fundamentally the meaning of PSB. In fact it renders meaningless its core commitment to publicness understood as the general public and its general public interest. It marks a regression to pre-20th century forms of public life and experience such as existed before the advent of radio broadcasting.

What was public life and what were publics then? They were always particular publics that gathered in a particular place at a particular time for a particular event. These typically consisted of political, religious, sporting or cultural occasions: the political rally or state occasion, the church service, the cricket or football match; the opera, concert or theatre. Which ever case you take it is clear that the public is always a minority interest public of some sort; a self-selecting, self-defining body of the faithful gathered together for a common purpose. Access to all such occasions was limited by a number of factors that depended not only on time and money but also, and crucially, on availability. The vast majority of people before broadcasting had never heard or seen the king, the prime minister or a full-scale symphony orchestra performing in concert, simply because they lived too far from the metropolitan centres where public life, people and events were situated. Even the reading publics of books, magazines and newspapers remained interest publics of some kind; particular political opinion publics, taste publics, gendered publics.

We entirely fail to understand the significance of broadcasting if we do not recognise the structurally different public that it created: the *general* public, society at large, anyone and everyone within range of reception and in possession of a decent receiving apparatus. Now anyone anywhere could hear the voice of the monarch or political leaders of the day, had live and direct access to a football match or a symphony concert or a religious service from church and much more besides. Events that had hitherto been for particular publics now became generally available and of general interest to the new general public.

The general public is not an amalgam of particular publics writ large. Nor is the general interest that it creates the sum of particular interests. The general interest marks the broadening and deepening of the range of experi-

ences of public life and events that are available to us as individuals. Through broadcasting many things of potential interest to all now became available to all. I may like to watch, for instance, international soccer or rugby and be occasionally enthralled by it. That does not mean I am a soccer or rugby fan. Soccer fans constitute a particular community of interest who follow the game (more exactly, their club) week in week out. They are prepared to pay for access to Sky's premium sports channels to follow their passion. The general interest in international sport continues to be protected by the listed events in broadcasting acts that grant a right of access to them on behalf of the free-to-air terrestrial broadcasters and the general public whom they serve. It is designed to prevent the removal of such events from the common public domain and their privatisation for particular paying interest publics.

The general public and its general interests are the unique effect of radio and television broadcasting which produced it as a matter of fact, almost as a by-product of their generous, indiscriminate scatter. The discovery of this new public and the working through of what it meant took time. But it is a process that, from the beginning through to the present, lies at the heart of the meaning of democracy. We should never forget what a recent thing mass representative democracy is, nor how fragile it seemed in the first half of the last century. The establishment of mass representative democracy in the UK (the Representation of the People Act, 1918) coincided with the beginning of broadcasting that supplied the unprecedented, unique and necessary conditions through which the meaning of democracy could be continuously and routinely worked through. It made the *demos*, the people, the whole population, into an audience with live access to a host of worldly events, public discussions, entertainment and cultural resources that were hitherto beyond the reach of the vast majority. The general public is first and last a political public, the communicative realisation of the democratic process, the means by which a dialogue is maintained routinely, day in day out, between the public world of politics and the private worlds of individuals. When constituted as a public service, broadcasting is neither part of the state, nor of civil society. It is an independent public body, answerable to both and charged with the task of maintaining the necessary conditions of public life for all, independent of class, age, sex, religion or ethnicity. This huge task has been discharged, never without difficulty or tension, but on the whole successfully by national broadcasters such as the BBC.

It is *because* the audience in public service broadcasting is acknowledged as the general public that it has developed its characteristic method for the delivery of mixed program services in national channels that reach all parts of the country. Only in this way does it fulfil its representative remit which is at the heart of its democratic mandate. On the one hand the service is for each and all, irrespective of who they are or where they live. On the other hand, within the GBP (the Great British Public), there are of course a host of differences that depend on age, class, sex, beliefs, tastes, attitudes and where you happen to live. The historic task of PSB has been to cater for these dif-

ferences within the general public through programs that acknowledge their particular preferences and circumstances, while preserving it *as* the general public in the first and last instance. If there is such a thing as the *general* interest it is expressed and maintained by mixed programme services for the general public. In the UK the national terrestrial TV channels, BBC Radio4 and the World Service, still maintain a mix of programmes in their daily output, but under increasing market pressure.

Audiences defined as consumers will naturally be considered in terms of their particular interests and for which they are willing to pay. Under market conditions the general interest and the general public collapses. The complete range of programmes available on Sky's EPG represents the total mix (and more) of the terrestrial PSB television channels. But what has disappeared is the appearance of the elements in the mix, side by side in a single programme service or channel through the changing days, weeks and months of the year. Generic programming has replaced it. Instead of religious programmes on Sundays, or sport on Saturdays or children's programmes at tea-time each has been repackaged as an all-day everyday customised option for a particular public. Religious, sporting and children's programs now no longer appear in relation to each other, at particular times of the day and week, as part of a common public domain. Each has been withdrawn from the general public and the general interest. Each now represents only a self-selecting, self-defining minority. All have regressed to those 19th century publics made up of discrete, self-involved communities of interest that acknowledge nothing outside themselves (community broadcasting is not in principle democratic).

Mass democracy grants formal political equality to all and is (like justice) blind to difference. Its fundamental principle is inclusion. On the other hand, and only as a result of their inclusion, there have been growing demands for rights on the part of hitherto excluded groups; the new social movements of the late 20th century and the politics of recognition. The politics of culture, since the 1980s, has emphasised difference, diversity and choice. It may look like the triumph of consumption as life-style, but it is more than that. Culture, for most of the 20th century, was supplied by the culture industries. The new communication technologies of the last twenty years or so increasingly allow individuals to customise their own taste preferences and to create their own cultures. A host of new lightweight portable audio/visual appliances have come onto the market recently that depend on digitisation, computers and the Internet; MP3s and iPods, digital cameras, video-cams and image scanners, CDs and DVDs, the latest generation of mobile phones. Individual and family home-pages, on-line text- and photo-blogging, text-messaging and the exchange of digital images (still and moving) on mobile phones are all indications of the ways in which individuals now create and disseminate statements about themselves, their beliefs, their tastes and their lives. Interactivity is the buzzword that partly captures what this transformed and enhanced presentation of self in everyday life is about. It is part of the

long, complex, continuing process of working through the meaning of democratic ways of life. Sky is one contemporary response to this general process.

Conclusion

What I have described is not an either – or scenario. It would be absurd to disparage what Sky and other contemporary instances of the digital revolution represent. They are all part of the personalisation of experience as something that individuals can now increasingly manage and manipulate themselves through new everyday technologies of self-expression and communication. But these developments do not surpass older broadcast technologies of the earlier 20th century, nor do they replace their function. That function, I have tried to show, is not to be thought of in terms of some notion of the ‘value-added’ content of certain kinds of programme. It is much more to do with a communicative relationship between broadcasting and the new kind of general public and general interest that its indiscriminate scatter created. That relationship exists in an order of time – the living present – that is embedded in the natural, existential arc of days and seasons and depends for its possibility upon the liveness and immediacy of the technology. I have suggested that broadcasting uniquely spans several orders of time – my time, the time of day, the time of institutions, the time of the event – and brings them together into a gathered *now* that joins the lives of individuals with the life and times of the world. That is the incomparable communicative affordance of live broadcasting. It does this day by day and every day and it is *irreplaceable*.

The difficult problem that social democracies face today lies in squaring the circle of contradiction between its fundamental inclusiveness that depends on the denial of difference, and the demands that inevitably and increasingly arise, once everyone *is* included, for the recognition of the right to be different. The economic, political and cultural developments of the late 20th century have all been in the direction of diversity, difference and choice. This places increasing strain on the unity of the political body, the nation-state, as the guarantor and defender both of democratic inclusiveness and the rights of difference. It puts national systems of broadcasting, through which these tensions are played out daily and routinely, under similar stress.

It is in the interest of nation states committed to social democracy to preserve such systems for they preserve the principle and practice of a common public life against all those contemporary forces that fragment it. The enrichment of private life and experience is no bad thing. It is one side of the democratic coin that makes possible self-realisation and fulfilment. But if it takes place at the expense of public life and experience – the other side of the coin – it has catastrophic consequences for the meaning of democracy. Broadcasting, pace Peacock, is not a business like any other. It is not

a business at all. It is at heart a political matter. That is why state-regulated public services developed in the 20th century as its rationalisation and justification. Public service, as is now abundantly clear, is the only means of guaranteeing *broadcast* radio and television services. And in our world broadcasting is an indispensable guarantor of open, democratic forms of public life. It is a mark of how far we have lost sight of the essential meaning of broadcasting that it is discussed today in the language of economics and consumer choice and the political rhetoric of citizenship.

Note

1. The women's movement and the civil rights movement. Both appear in 1950s America and give rise to what is later labelled 'identity politics' or 'the politics of recognition' (Taylor 1994). The refusal of Rosa Parkes to give up her seat to a white passenger in Montgomery, Alabama on 1 December 1955 – the trigger of the civil rights movement – is exemplary of the new politics of everyday life.

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Public Service and Entertainment

A Case Study of Danish Television 1951-2003

Hanne Bruun

Television entertainment genres like quiz shows, game shows and talk shows are often regarded as having very limited cultural importance in the discussions of public service broadcasting. Although whether entertainment ought to be included as a public service programming obligation is debated, the political legitimacy of public service broadcasting is clearly linked with the ability of its programming to attract the audience, and therefore with its popularity. And so in the realm of entertainment, the effort to creatively manage the tension between a special and recognisable public service programming profile and the need for popularity has been a distinctive feature of Danish public service television.

The aim of Danish public service television has been and still is the universal-service full-scale model, which certainly includes entertainment programming. From 1951 until 1988 when the monopoly in television ended, the Danish Broadcasting Company [DR] was only the sole provider of national television. There was a heritage of entertainment in DR public service radio even before television, although it was first mentioned as a programming *obligation* only in the Danish Broadcasting Act of 1973. After 1988, entertainment became an important strategic tool in the competition between the two national public service television broadcasters, DR and TV 2. Both operate as universal services in terms of the genres offered.

Presently entertainment is also an important tool for public service television in its competition with commercial broadcasters. In fact, entertainment genres are the focus of the commercial broadcasters, although with limited success. In Denmark for the last twelve years, fully 70 percent of television viewing has been for public service television (*Nordic Media Market*, 2003). Furthermore, PSB entertainment programming is perennially among the top-ten list of programmes with the highest ratings (*Gallup TV-meter database 1992-2004*).

This chapter argues that the reason why public service television is doing so well in Denmark has to do with the entertainment programming tradition of DR during the monopoly, and with the way this tradition has also been developed by the second public service broadcaster, TV 2.

Analysing the development of entertainment programming in Danish public service television from 1951 to 2003 suggests the development of an *egalitarian value profile*. It is closely linked to *how* the communicative and aesthetic characteristics of television entertainment genres have been put to use over more than fifty years. The theoretical point of departure for the historical analysis will be a short presentation of the characteristics of the three genres that dominate the entertainment programming in Danish public service television. These genres are 1) show entertainment (i.e., vaudeville shows or circus and music shows such as the *Eurovision Song Contest*), 2) quiz and game shows and 3) talk shows.

The egalitarian value profile is a result of *why and how* quiz and game shows, and also talk shows, came to dominate entertainment programming. In order to picture the kind of cultural sphere created by entertainment programmes, the genre perspective on development needs to be combined with economic and social historic perspectives, as well as the aesthetics and reception context of the television medium.

Three entertainment genres

As a category, entertainment is a special kind of television programming situated between factual and fictive genres. Unlike TV sport, television entertainment does not constitute a singular subject area. In general terms we can say that entertainment is characterised by having a common objective in respect of the viewer's feelings: It aims to entertain viewers and, when successful, viewers are 'joined' in a common or shared feeling. Thus, a fundamental communicative result of successful entertainment is social cohesion across levels of society, with the range depending on the way entertainment genres are implemented.

The three genres treated here attempt in various ways to create mediated social interaction and experiences by insisting on the immediacy of the programmes, and on the experiences of contact between programme and viewers. This is handled by means of studio audiences and hosts. But each genre has unique characteristics.

Show entertainment is more oriented toward form than content. The broadcast circus is the best example. The perfectly performed act is central to the phenomenon of show entertainment, rather than the personality of the individual artist. The act should demonstrate exceptional human capability, for example the performers' lightness and elegance that challenges forces of nature, such as gravity. The audience as television viewer plays the role of *spectator* in show entertainment. That role is necessary for all the training to become a show. The audience is therefore an integrated part of the show phenomenon, and it is the degree to which success is achieved by the act itself that the audience approves of. Mistakes cannot be tolerated because

the less than exceptional human element would become evident. Thus, show entertainment is a cool, judgmental and quite brutal form of entertainment. The viewers must be impressed, even awe struck for the entertainment to succeed. Boredom, and at worst ridicule, are the price of failure.

Moreover, show entertainment has a special kind of host, typically called either a master of ceremonies or a 'ringmaster'. The host's function is to link together the series of acts to create continuity, and to maintain contact with the audience on behalf of the entire presentation as performance. The host should praise the acts, but his or her human aspects are not the focus for the studio audience and viewers' attention. The host should maintain a calculated distance and strike an elegant tone in accordance with the characteristics of the show.

In quiz and game shows other forms of entertainment are used. In contrast to show entertainment, these genres are based on parlour and other games, as well as children's play. While show entertainment stems from public entertainment, quiz and game shows stem to a much higher degree from the private sphere. The genre requires *participants* rather than spectators. A distinction can be made between two fundamental styles of play in this genre. One is a style of play focusing on the competition itself. Knowledge and performance are featured and the prize can play a significant role. The second style of play is less focused on the competition. Here the game is rather an occasion to be together with people and to have fun. Winning or losing is a secondary concern. Consequently, the prizes play a smaller and largely symbolic role, if any role at all. Across these types of play the quiz master's function is to lead the game according to the rules and to manage the contact between the programme and the viewers. This function is fulfilled in countless ways, but the game and the play are again the focus rather than the host.

The talk-show entertainment genre contrasts with the previous two because it focuses mainly and directly on the human aspect and personality of the host and famous guests. Furthermore, it is neither the act nor the game that entertains: it is the talk or chat. The studio audience and viewers are placed in the role of *audience* listening to stories about personal matters and observing the interaction between the famous guests and the studio host. An essential part of the content of this genre is precisely the invitation to viewers to take part in an apparently voluntary but polished social gathering where *the personal but not the private life* of the guests and the host constitute the entertainment. The host is required to establish the social tone and contact with viewers, and thus the host's personality is of vital importance.

Four fundamental conditions

The development of an egalitarian value profile of entertainment programming in Danish public service television is also a result of the interplay of

four fundamental conditions that are relevant to both commercial and public service broadcasting. These conditions have influenced the production of entertainment programmes throughout the history of Danish television.

First, the economic framework for making Danish television entertainment is comparatively limited. Although Denmark is a small country (5 million inhabitants), it costs the same to produce television programming regardless of population – whether it is for five or fifty million viewers. Second, the medium has a voracious appetite for material, inasmuch as in principal it is the same audience that wants to be served new content every day. The rate of turnover for entertainment material is thus quite high in television. Expanding broadcasting time within channels, as well as a growing number of total stations operating in the market, increases the turnover rate. Third, the medium is an independent form of expression with media characteristics promoting certain aesthetic and content-related features. Television entertainment happens in symbiosis with the reception context. Finally, the very substantial and large social and cultural changes that took place in the period from the 1950s to 2003 had a considerable influence on television entertainment.

As elsewhere, the factor that has played the greatest role for television entertainment in Denmark is youth culture. That culture was partly enabled by the favourable economic conditions in Denmark from the end of the 1950s. Youth culture became interwoven with mass media. Beat, rock and pop music became an essential symbol of how youth culture tastes differed from older generations.

As we shall see in the period analyses that follow, the interplay of the four conditions constitutes a fundamental framework for the production of the entertainment programmes in the three genres. Furthermore, it produced changes in the programmes and in the way in which television addressed viewers, and thus in the roles and experiences television entertainment offered viewers.

1951-64 – the Golden Age of show entertainment

In this first period, there is no doubt that entertainment played an essential role in early television history to the time when television could fairly be considered an actual mass medium in Denmark.

Due to post-war economic conditions and also the Danish politicians' rather qualified goodwill regarding the new medium, it was very important to create interest among the Danes to invest in a television set concurrently with the development of broadcasting practices. People should be attracted by the content.

In spite of the modest amount of entertainment on the schedule in the period (Hjarvard & Jespersen, 2001) the impact of television entertainment on a national cultural agenda was quite large because of the amount of at-

tention that television entertainment received in the daily press and among ordinary Danes. An indication of this influence is that the number of license holders rose from 65,000 to 137,000 in connection with one programme called *Underholdning for Millionær* (Entertainment for Millions) that premiered in March 1957. This was an aid program for Hungary. There is quite a history involved with this, but for our purposes the point is that the considerable publicity contributed more to the mental importance of television entertainment than its relative amount would otherwise suggest.

The cultural impact and mental importance of early television entertainment is also linked to the fact that entertainment presented 'original' television that showed the possibilities of immediacy in the medium. By comparison, much of the rest of the material on Danish television in the period was documentary films and newsreels that could also be seen in the movie theatres. Television entertainment was furthermore explicitly *Danish*. Relatively few foreign programmes were obtained from Eurovision (*Dansk Mediehistorie*, 1997:46-50). Television entertainment thus provided images of well-known hosts from radio and screened talked-about actors, musicians and entertainers. These celebrities were shown at home in the viewers' private living rooms. By this means television made the home a place for using media entertainment to an even greater extent than radio had already achieved. The magnitude of the experience could thereby again surpass its quantity.

The first director of PSB television in Denmark, Jens-Frederik Lawaetz, was the former head of entertainment in DR-radio. He knew the power of entertainment. As a strategy both for survival and acquiring viewers, entertainment became a central part of the image of the new medium. Early television entertainment was first of all very influenced by versioning popular entertainment programmes borrowed from radio. As elsewhere, these were to a large extent show entertainment programmes, particularly of the vaudeville type that was already familiar weekend entertainment. The show genre dominated the first period of Danish television entertainment from 1951 to the middle of the 1960s.

The dominance of show entertainment, needed mainly to gain popularity, also meant that television (like radio) was thoroughly dependent on a well-stocked entertainment industry outside the medium per se. The performers could not make a living exclusively by appearing on television in a small country like Denmark. But television increased the demand for material from the entertainment industry. In a sense, television entertainment buttered the daily bread. The programmes in the period consumed a large number of performances supplied by popular artists. They appeared again and again in these vaudeville shows, either as single acts or for entire programmes with musical entertainment in the numerous solo programmes of the period. The same tendency toward plentiful use of, and dependency on, material from a commercial entertainment industry outside the medium in itself was evident in the considerable supply of TV circus shows.

The high priority given to show entertainment in the early period of Danish television correspondingly made the master of ceremonies the predominant type of host. Professionals came to the medium to handle the cheerful and elegant linking together of the single acts. Some were from radio originally, but many of the hosts in the first period also had strong relations to the commercial entertainment industry. An example was the television entertainment host, Otto Leisner, himself a songwriter for hit music of the day, a former radio entertainment host and the person who introduced the popular music series *Pladeparade* (Record Parade) in 1957 (1957-63).

However, during the period DR's view of itself was characterised by the classical paternalistic public service ethos. That resulted in a rather ambivalent relationship to the commercial entertainment industry, where they were anyway forced to find the entertainment material and some of the hosts. This ambivalence was evident in DR's relationship to the *Eurovision Song Contest* phenomenon. This Eurovision programme premiered in 1956 and Denmark was part of it from 1957 to 1966. In 1963 the musical husband and wife team, Jørgen and Grethe Ingmann, won the contest. Thus, Denmark was responsible for hosting the show for the first time in 1964. Yet DR's success in the contest did not prevent DR from refraining from participation in 1966 on the recommendation of DR's entertainment department. The reason officially given for not participating was apparently a recurrent dissatisfaction with the quality of the national material and the disinterest of viewers (M. Kilde, 1978:353). The *Eurovision Song Contest* was dormant for Danes until 1978 when Denmark began to participate again.

But the official reasons don't explain everything behind the decision. The problem for DR was that the same professional composers and songwriters of pop music repeatedly won the national contest. As a result, the contest had the appearance of being fixed, and thus the commercial aura of the show and its connections to the record industry became too obvious. In 1962 a conflict of interest scandal captured the public eye. According to the rules, the individual songwriter and composer were to be kept secret until the winner was selected. But it became publicly known just days before the competition that the theatre director and entertainer, Sejr Volmer Sørensen – at that time also employed in the television entertainment department – had personal economic interests in the competition. He was the writer of one of the competing songs and could therefore be regarded as some one using PSB to cultivate himself. DR removed his song from the competition but, as it turned out, Sejr Volmer Sørensen was also responsible for writing the lyrics to the winning song of 1962.

DR's rather ambivalent relationship to the commercial aspects, as well as the mass cultural aspects of the music contest, was not diminished by the Danish cultural debate of the 1960s. One of the central objects of debate and criticism focused on mainstream pop music and its 'destructive cultural influence' (Dansk litteraturhistorie, 1985:270). The criticism of mass culture came from a series of new authors from the cultural Left, as well as from

established cultural critics. In many ways the debate was a continuation of the cultural debate from the 1950s when American comics and the literary taste of the population at large were hotly debated. The critical attitude to commercial media culture in the debate influenced DR's attitude about the *Eurovision Song Contest*. By not participating DR in part silenced the criticism and in part delayed confronting its own ambivalent relationship to the commercial entertainment industry.

Although show entertainment was dominant in the early period, there were also a number of quiz programmes. Creating TV versions of radio programmes was common. There was also considerable inspiration from British television, as well as American television. The quiz show phenomenon clearly indicates that from the beginning television was a trans-national phenomenon with producers, to a great extent looking toward other countries for creative inspiration. Already in the 1950s two styles of play characterised the quiz: socially oriented and competitively oriented. *The educational aim*, however, was evident in quizzes with professional experts, as well as in series with amateur experts as participants.

The most famous quiz series was *Kvit eller Dobbelt* (Double or Quits, 1957-59). It focused on amateurs' expert knowledge. For the time, a considerable prize was at stake: 10,000 DKK. This placed the competition at the very centre of public interest. *Kvit eller Dobbelt* and the series *Kvikke Ho'der* (Sharp Minds) were modelled on *The \$64,000 Question* and *Quiz Kids*. These programmes did not invite viewers to guess along with the contestants. Rather, viewers were supposed to admire their knowledge and steady nerves. In contrast, knowledge quizzes featured professional experts. As a result, the competitive element was downplayed and the prizes were absent. This was true, for example, in *Spørgsmålstegnet* (The Question Mark, 1955-56). Here the viewers could both learn something and follow the experts' guessing process, but perhaps to the detriment of the excitement associated with large prizes.

In the 1960s everyday people increasingly became participants, and as a result non-academic, general knowledge was given a higher priority in quiz shows. The tendency was for people to play and compete on the basis of competencies not acquired in school. The programmes encouraged the viewers to guess and play along regardless of their level and horizon of knowledge. Therefore, quiz and game shows gave the viewers a participatory role with respect to entertainment, encouraging them to play along with the programme participants and the hosts.

To sum, the entertainment programming and its significance in the first period was dominated by a strong need for popularity as well as a strong but certainly problematic dependence on the national commercial entertainment industry. The immediacy of the medium made it commercially interesting, but also a culturally integrating force giving Danes the opportunity to share an audiovisual cultural sphere, if mainly in the role as spectators.

The first period also shows that even if the classic paternalistic communicative ethos of public service was detectable also in entertainment program-

ming, the need for an audience was very strong as a creative driving force. Entertainment was thereby potentially bringing the viewers and the public service institution to eye level. The fact that TV entertainment in the quiz shows stepped down from the stage and into another, more egalitarian relation to viewers came to influence the TV entertainment of the second period.

1965-78 – television transforms entertainment

Television's enormous need for content, combined with extensive use of the most popular professional entertainers in a small country like Denmark, began to cause problems. Danes preferred to be at home and television's high standard of entertainment was rapidly eroding the *raison d'être* of public entertainment places, and thereby of various artists. In addition, the political and cultural conflicts in Danish society after the Second World War became ever clearer from the middle of the 1960s through the 1970s. It was almost a matter of course that as a monopoly DR, with its political, social and cultural obligations, would be a battleground for cultural policy.

The cultural elite questioned the so-called 'meaningless' show entertainment. Television entertainment became an arena for disputes about cultural policy. The indirect ideological impact of show and quiz entertainment was the focus of the debate, but this was grounded in the cultural value of television entertainment overall. Another battle over taste in entertainment was linked to a generational conflict. The status of post-war influence of the U.S. was pronounced. The currents from the U.S., and to almost the same extent from Britain, resulted in generation-specific preferences that split the audience. Music in particular had such effects. Rock and youth culture in the 1950s, 1960s, and (in part) 1970s, symbolised the rejection of the taste and lifestyle norms of the older generation, as well as the general critical attitude to the norms and ideological foundation of established society. To a large extent, generation representatives with these alternative preferences and attitudes were employed in DR, and therefore also influenced the institution's ideas about what television entertainment was and should be.

Apart from these content-related and socio-historical reasons for the problems of show entertainment, it is also important to take into account a reason related to media aesthetics. In show entertainment intimacy and the human aspects were decidedly at some remove. Such programmes mainly work to impress the audience. That is most easily achieved by a direct and concentrated sensory experience on the auditorium stage or the circus ring. Television's small screen and its association with everyday life as the context for the viewing experience could not do the form justice. In a television version, show entertainment can too easily be boring because it is quite difficult to recreate the on-site sensory experience for viewers.

All things considered, show entertainment was therefore in a crisis situation in several respects. The period from the middle of the 1960s to the end of the 1970s became a period of ferment when entertainment genres and kinds of content were explored to find solutions to such problems.

A definite but still nationally produced alternative to show entertainment was offered by the celebrity talk show. The relative independence of the genre from an entertainment industry situated outside the medium itself meant that Danish TV could thereby, to a greater extent, become self-sufficient in the production of entertainment programming. Also this genre emphasised the human aspect and intimacy rather than the presentation of acts, and the content of the genre featured the personality-oriented nature of, and social interaction between, the host, programme participants and viewers. Two essential characteristics that became important for the continued development of the genre in Danish TV influenced the use of the genre.

First, the genre affected the relationship between the medium and the entertainment industry. Television became part of a calculated exchange. For the entertainment industry, television could be used to create and maintain the interest of viewers in the films, music and theatre productions in which the interviewed guests were involved. For television, chatting with guests was the entertaining content rather than the performances in which they starred. This meant guests could be obtained from many more areas of the celebrity universe – for instance, from the world of the television medium itself. In short, television became a strategic part of an advertising and image campaign for others and for itself. The medium was no longer merely an entertainment scene but also a space for entertaining conversation and social gatherings (Scannell, 1996). In this way television became an important participant in the media cycle, and in a wider commercial entertainment industry. The human aspect and interest in the personal and intimate, which are hallmarks of the talk-show genre, harmonised with the reception context, and also with the increasing degree of familiarity characteristic of the medium in the 1970s.

Second, the use of the talk show in Danish TV entertainment was strongly marked by its roots in a tradition called ‘portrait programmes.’ The series called *Lørdagshjørnet* (The Saturday Corner, 1976-84) was the first attempt to produce an entertainment talk show. In this series the guest’s life history and professional successes were the dominant themes. The host, whose personality may have been the most important entertaining element in American shows from the very beginning, played an incredibly minor role in such Danish programmes. The Danish host had the role of merely keeping the guest’s story going. Often the talk shows resembled numerous show programmes in which celebrities performed throughout an entire programme. All in all, Danish television’s attempt to cultivate the talk show genre along the lines of the already established programme tradition and the viewers’ programme expectations situated *Lørdagshjørnet* at a midpoint between the American talk show and the portrait programme. In American entertainment

talk shows, which were an essential source of inspiration for Danish attempts with the genre, the stand-up show stamps the genre. But in Denmark, the portrait programme heritage and the very low-key studio host came to characterise its use of the genre.

Along with the use of the talk show in the 1970s, quiz and game shows were key elements in the development process toward a greater degree of PSB self-sufficiency. In comparison with show entertainment, this genre was also truer to the aesthetics of the medium, as well as to the reception context. But the use of the quiz show changed. The knowledge quiz was no longer predominant. Especially the staging of the quiz master was undergoing changes.

A good example of this change was the expert knowledge quiz and Scandinavian co-production called *Kontrapunkt* (Counterpoint, 1971-80). This programme attempted to combine the topic of classical music with quiz. In spite of the fairly narrow topic and culturally educational aspect of this guessing game, which meant that the lion's share of the viewers were excluded from actively guessing, the quiz became popular. The explanation was no doubt the personality and staging of the quiz master, Stig Broman, and his interaction with participants and viewers. He became famous throughout the Nordic countries for his brilliantly coloured lounge suit and charismatic way of conducting the contest, which tested Scandinavian music experts' knowledge of classical music. The clash between Broman's over enthusiastic and slightly affected schoolmaster style and the extremely serious experts was an essential part of the show's entertainment value.

Thus, a focus on personality, human fellowship and sociability as a goal in itself, stamped the development in Danish television entertainment in the second period. The crisis of show entertainment, the growing need for more programmes due to increases in broadcasting time, and the comparatively small Danish economy, all combined to force DR to be creative. Very much in line with the aesthetics of the medium and the reception context, viewers were no longer predominantly defined as spectators. This period moved DR towards defining viewers as audience and participants, a trend that became increasingly obvious in the third period.

1979-89 – journalistic and personality-centred entertainment

From the end of the 1970s until the 1988 premiere of TV 2, the second and a non-DR public service television station in Denmark, a third period was characterised by DR's continued attempts to find new economically feasible Danish entertainment. The coming competition in television was the driving force behind new initiatives. DR got a foretaste of what the future might bring from studies about the Danes' use of television from neighbouring

countries. DR considered especially the strong German position on Saturday evening when families gathered in front of the television to be a problem for them. Another issue was the decline in DR's own production within TV entertainment in the 1970s, which posed a problem of legitimisation in respect to its obligations regarding cultural policy. DR therefore began experimenting with journalistic-oriented entertainment (Bruun, 1999:127). Inspiration for this kind of journalism was gathered, in part, from the American daytime talk-show pioneer, Phil Donahue. It led to changes in journalistic approaches also related to the politicisation of private experiences; especially evident in feminist movement successes impacting the public agenda in the 1970s.

The series launching these changes in Denmark was called *Kanal 22* (Channel 22, 1979-82). The programme mixed journalistic topics of current interest with traditional elements of entertainment, such as musical performances and sketches. The series became a great success among viewers and for the hosts. But the series was controversial in Danish television due to explicitly mixing journalistic and entertaining features. The interviews with ordinary people, combined with a critical popular and human-interest approach to the journalistic story, made the programme innovative. The journalism was thereby supplemented with an elementary quality of entertainment. The *Kanal* programmes were also innovative in the sense that they placed the journalist in the role of the interviewee's helper. Hence, emphasis was placed on the journalist's skills as an almost therapeutic interlocutor, and on his human magnetism.

In 1982 the format, as well as the hosts, were successfully moved to Saturday evening and expanded to an approximately three-hour long programme entitled *Lørdagskanalen* (The Saturday Channel, 1982-86). Over the years, the hosts became increasingly key figures in the series because their way of interacting as host team personalities became very important components. In this way *Lørdagskanalen* attempted, at an early time in Danish television, to feature qualities more often associated with the host role in celebrity talk shows in American and British television. Despite its viewer success and a number of innovative elements, *Lørdagskanalen* was discontinued. But TV 2 saw plenty of possibilities in adopting the format when that channel began broadcasting in 1988 (Bruun, 2000). Now the format was called *Elevat2ren* (The Elevat2'r, 1988-95).

For its part, DR pursued the talk show genre through the 1980s, but the content of journalism changed from critical populist and investigative to showbiz journalism, with an emphasis on the performers and products of pop music in particular. They introduced and established television personalities. The focus on the function of the host in the talk-show genre also increased. The entertainment thereby shifted from 'acts' and 'features' to being centred on the role of the host, and on the host's and programme's contact with viewers. This happened by means of a paradoxical 'professional un-professionalism', wherein conventions for tasteful and elegant show enter-

tainment were broken – for example, by means of precisely staged threats against the control over the programme. The style put emphasis on the human element and on relaxed and cheerful interaction in the programme, and also between programme and viewer. The programme thus contained a highly predominant self-referential dimension that was supposed to deliver the entertainment value and could, furthermore, be considered as the ultimate in self-sufficient television entertainment.

Taken as a whole, an important kind of personality-centred entertainment developed out of the showbiz journalistic programmes in the 1980s. It may be called 'Video-Jockey TV', (VJ TV). This is radio's hit-list programme converted to television. It is characterised as a hybrid between a concert and a music video. Two series, *Eldorado* (1984-85) and *Stardust*, introduced this kind of television to Denmark. The form was familiar from both German and British television youth-oriented entertainment in the 1970s. Danish VJ TV transformed television into a mixture of a concert hall and discotheque, and the predominant content was mainstream pop music. The host in Danish VJ TV was important as an exponent of musical style. He was the witty and lively host that linked individual pop songs and music videos, but did not pose as interviewer. It was the direct contact between host and viewers that was critical.

The development of VJ TV may be regarded as part of DR's attempt to recapture the youth from German TV in particular, and thereby prepare itself for the coming competition with TV 2. Another inspiration was the introduction of American MTV in 1981, and later the European version in 1987.

In the 1980s the record industry boomed, world wide and in Denmark. A large number of Danish rock and pop bands appeared, aided by the record industry (Dansk Mediehistorie, vol. 3, 1997:91-92). In the 1970s rock music had evolved from the music of rebellion and a musical niche into mainstream popular music. A number of subgenres within rhythmic music emerged, of which pop music was increasingly the genre that cut across age groups. Programmes in which pop music was the main component were quick to produce, relatively inexpensive, and enjoyed broad audience appeal. Ironically perhaps, by providing such material for the medium, pop music recreated a role previously played by the entertainment industry in the golden age of television show entertainment. The difference, however, was that the music industry and the television medium were in a more equal relationship of interdependence: the music industry's need to introduce new products conformed nicely to television's need for more material and quick turnover. Pop music offered a nearly inexhaustible source of suitable content.

VJ TV with its focus on media personalities also seemed to affect the quiz and game programmes. The staging of the quiz master again transformed the mode of address to viewers. The series called *Labyrint* (The Labyrinth, 1989) introduced the young radio disc jockey, Kim Schumacher, as quiz master. Schumacher incarnated the fast-talking, roguish and cheeky role of the host that especially characterised the style of American and British radio

DJs. While ordinary people participated in the game, the host's ridicule of and verbal attacks on the participants' personalities and skills in the game were delivered with just enough self-irony and distance that the going stayed good. That it was even possible to have a quiz master like Schumacher on Danish public television was a sign of altered relations between television and viewers. The viewers, and thus to a certain degree also the participants in the programmes, no longer needed to be treated with patronising politeness by the institutional representatives of this formerly very official medium. The participants, and potentially the viewers, were to a greater extent regarded as equal playmates.

The cultivation of the television personality, of sociability and of immediacy characterised the third period in Danish public service television. By the same token, it positioned viewers in the role of audience as well as participants. The entertainment programs of public service television focused more and more on its contact with viewers. This strategy developed strongly in the fourth period.

1990-2003 – competitive entertainment

The fourth period is characterised by increasing competition for Danish television viewers. At first the competition was between the two PSB companies, DR and TV 2. But from the mid-90s, competition widened to include commercial stations. TV 2 nationally competed and directly with, especially, TV3 and TvDanmark because financing was based on advertising. Within television entertainment, increased competition prompted the Danish stations to attempt to foster even closer links with viewers.

The struggle for the commercially most interesting target audiences became intense toward the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the new millennium. This competition caused television entertainment to become everyday TV. Rather than scheduling television entertainment on the weekends when the nation 'should' relax in front of the TV, it was increasingly scheduled in slots according to desired target audiences, as well as on the basis of concerns regarding flow and competition. In the struggle for the largest but also the right audience segments, two television entertainment genres in particular were vital: the quiz and game show, and the talk show. The talk show played an important role in TV 2's considerable success as a supplier of public service mainstream entertainment from about 1990 to 2003. Quiz and game programmes flourished in pure generic form as before, but the genre could especially be seen also in new combinations with other well-known genres.

Again, the logic behind the development of Danish television entertainment was apparently the need for affordable content to meet the still expanding broadcast time. The emphasis of the genres on the personal, cheerful and convivial interaction with the studio host and famous guests, and on

the viewers' possibility of participating and playing along, was a considerable asset. Danish public service television thereby developed into a particular kind of social gathering. However, the competition between channels encouraged experimentation with the genres and a willingness to take risks. These tendencies made it clear that Danish television was by now part of a global commercial market for television entertainment. The struggle for attractive formats intensified.

At the beginning of the 1990s the volume of talk shows exploded (Bruun, 2000). TV 2 brazenly threw itself into its own version of the American late-night talk show where TV personalities like David Letterman and Jay Leno have thrived for years. It was the journalist, Michael Meyerheim, who was the host of the Danish version; the programme was suitably called *Meyerheim & Co.* (TV 2, 1991-93). In 1993-94 *Meyerheim after Eight* aired, and with this Saturday prime-time series TV 2 more explicitly followed the portrait-oriented kind of celebrity talk show, which generally characterises Danish television's use of the genre.

Danish celebrity talk shows continued to be dominated by a focus on the life history and career of a famous guest. DR followed on the heels of TV 2 with similar series like *Talkshowet* (1991-93) and *Jarl's* (1994). Until the mid-1990s there was practically a talk-show war being waged between the two public service companies. The commercial stations stayed away. For TV 2, it was yet another talk show format that cemented the station's position as an entertainment supplier and contributed to creating quick viewer success. The channel revived and developed the journalistic entertainment format that DR had developed in the 1980s in the direction of the talk show, calling it as mentioned above *Eleva2ren* (Bruun, 2000).

In the middle of the 1990s the many entertainment talk shows on Danish TV stopped, however, due to a shortage of celebrities that had not already told their life stories on television. The solution to the problem came at about the same point in time and involved a fusion of genres. Already in 1995 DR had attempted to combine the entertainment talk show and the quiz in a talk-game series *Ka' det virk'li' passe* (Is It Really True?, 1995-96). The talk show was revitalised by two groups of celebrity guests that had to find out whether the stories told about the principal celebrity were true or false. The problem of already-told life stories and career histories was thus solved, and the celebrities could be re-circulated. The talk-game show furthermore removed the need for a funny studio host. Much of the entertainment value was now in the guessing and interaction among the participants, and potentially also the viewers.

The possibilities in combining talk, quiz and game genres were also tested in the DR series *Skattefri lørdag* (Tax Free Saturday, 1997), with similar success. The combination formed the basis for TV 2's programme developments at the end of the period, first with *Den Store Klassefest* (The School Class Reunion Party, 1998-2000), then with the spin-off *Venner for livet* (Friends for Life, 2001-2002) and also *Mit Sande Jeg* (My True Self, 2003). The innovative

aspect of these three series stems from the fresh view of the celebrity that the game-show element supplied; viewers were presented with the celebrity in the role of former pupil and classmate in *Den Store Klassefest*, in the role of best friend in *Venner for livet*, and in the role of private person in *Mit Sande Jeg*. The three series thus provided a new but universally human and exceedingly familiar perspective on the celebrities. Furthermore, this gave the producers the possibility of moving beyond the 'first league' of celebrities. The many games and contributors in the programmes meant there was no longer a total dependence on the entertainment value of a single famous person.

While revitalising Danish talk shows and television's self-sufficiency by adding competitive elements and positioning the viewers as audience as well as participants, the 'pure' quiz and game show was also thriving. If only due to the many new television channels, the amount of quiz and game programmes on Danish television increased in this period. But the genre was marked by a strong focus on giving ordinary people access to these game programmes. In this way the kinds of quiz shows offered were marked by ordinary people playing along. The persistent attempts to maintain and activate viewers by means of competitive elements led, for one thing, to the prizes themselves playing a more significant role in many of the programmes. Indeed, *Wheel of Fortune* (1988-2001), which TV 2 versioned and after a short time began using as a daily lead in to its evening programming, caused debate. It was in particular the series' emphasis on the prizes, and thereby indirectly on consumerism and commercial television entertainment, that caused the criticism to rain down on the American format. The products were presented and narrated in such a way that the programme acquired the character of one long advertisement interspersed with play. Sponsoring was furthermore not legal on Danish television until 1991. Although *Wheel of Fortune* therefore bought the prizes in its first years, the spirit of sponsored television entertainment had slipped into Danish public service television. But the series was immensely popular for many years.

However, players did not get far in *Wheel of Fortune* relying only on luck. The demands on the participants' ability to spell, on their ability to perform quick calculations of probability, and on their linguistic aptitudes were in fact quite high. The reason for the vitality of the series should undoubtedly be found in the fact that the game thus required its players to be reasonably intelligent, but without calling for encyclopaedic or media-produced fingertip knowledge. The participants, and potentially the viewers, were thus presented as worthy winners in the game. In spite of its commercial aura, *Wheel of Fortune* was not that simple to reject. Another essential reason for the vitality of the series was the host, who managed to create the necessary focus on the game and the rules and at the same time a relaxed and friendly mood. Viewers could start their TV evening by participating in the game.

The emphasis on the prizes and participation by ordinary people continued in quiz series. But the period from 1990 was not unequivocally marked by luck-based games of chance with big prizes. It was rather a period char-

acterised by a multiplicity of game programmes with varying styles of play, competency requirements, and prize sizes. The knowledge quiz continues to exist in the form of, for instance, *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* (TV 2, 1999+). The only kind of quiz that this period did not offer was the kind of knowledge quiz in which the participants were highly educated experts. The idea of the educational function of the quiz, in respect to the viewers, and the excitement over merely following the experts' deductive process, has almost disappeared from the screen.

The playful and in some respects far more eye level, childishly silly and crazy television entertainment that was seen in the fusion of the quiz and game show, and in the entertainment talk show, was also symptomatic of the traditional game shows of this period. DR's version of the British Channel 4 game show *Don't Forget Your Toothbrush* in 1995, was an example of the new style. The series became an enormous success for a DR hard-pressed by its prime competitor, TV 2, and furthermore made the stand-up comedian, Casper Christensen, a national celebrity.

The crucial innovation in the series was that the entertainment value was created in a direct interaction between the studio host's gimmickry and a large studio audience, which was partially instructed and the actual protagonist of the programme. The series also had an open door towards viewers, the programme being aired live and the live dimension being exploited in a number of ways so that viewers could participate. *Don't Forget Your Toothbrush* was further marked by a special kind of coarse and ironic humour, which in respect to participants was balanced on the edge of insult.

Don't Forget Your Toothbrush was a large-scale production and it influenced the standard for how television shows were produced in the years to come. This was quite noticeable through Danish television's increasingly whole-hearted involvement in the *Eurovision Song Contest* phenomenon throughout the 1990s. But this orientation toward the grandiose, imposing and polished did not represent a return to the vaudeville shows of former times. The difference was precisely that a competition was the backbone of the show, and thus here too the viewers were in the role of participants even if merely by means of a telephone vote.

The ambition to make the television viewer the protagonist of entertainment programmes also characterises the two competing public service companies' reality shows. The production of *Popstars* (2001-2003) by TV 2 and *Star For A Night* by DR (2001-2003) took the reality show genre in a slightly different direction than TV3's production of *Survivor* (1998-2004) and TvDanmarks production of *Big Brother* (1999-2004). Instead of cultivating the ability for social and psychological survival in ordinary people as featured in *Survivor* and *Big Brother*, a more traditional as well as ethically harmless story of professional talents among ordinary people was narrated in the two PSB serials. Thus, DR and TV 2 followed the fashion in television entertainment, but avoided the focus on money, humiliations and conflicts between human beings that so characterised the reality shows produced by

commercial channels. Nevertheless the popular music industry was deeply involved in the production of both shows, as well as in following the careers of the winners.

All in all, by the beginning of the new millennium the trend in Danish television entertainment can be described as an invitation to the ordinary viewer to be the protagonist of television entertainment: Television is not just something to watch but a potential activity of personal opportunity and importance.

Egalitarian and elitist value profiles in entertainment

In retrospect, two main conclusions can be drawn from the programming history of Danish public service entertainment. Firstly, public service television entertainment made the home the primary entertainment arena. The whole family, and everybody interested, could share the experience of nationally produced entertainment that was available to viewers without regard to economic means and geography. In this respect, television entertainment had a strong culturally integrating effect by creating a national audience. The audiovisual immediacy of television and the national framing of the broadcasting institution enhanced this effect. But as highlighted, the consequences for the small national entertainment scene outside television were significant. Quickly television entertainment was forced to rely heavily on genres that provided the television station with a large degree of self-sufficiency, and met the medium's content demands within the limits of a small economy. Under these circumstances public service television entertainment became the space of mediated play and chat in the form of quiz, game and talk shows, as well as creative hybrids of these genres.

The second main conclusion drawn from the programme history is that the genre profile of public service television entertainment increasingly blurred the distinctions between the entertainer and the entertained. Instead of the comparatively distant role as spectators of the medium in show entertainment, the aesthetics and communicative characteristics of the other dominating genres positioned Danish viewers as audiences and participants within the medium. Indeed, television entertainment became very dependent on the concrete participation of viewers. Competitions, viewer votes and personal participation gradually made entertainment, and thereby television, a medium of participation and sociability that is produced, to a large extent, by the viewers themselves. As an agency of social framing or structure, sociability is based on whatever in a given historic and cultural context links human beings together. It can not accommodate extreme variation in particular, individual differences in taste, humour and mood without vanishing (Simmel, 1910). Thus public service television entertainment in Denmark is offering viewers an increasingly accessible and common, shared cultural space.

Reality shows extend this cultural space of entertainment to now include the viewer's use of television as a part of self-identity processes: On the one hand television entertainment has become an integrated part of the ordinariness of everyday life, making the viewer the protagonist of entertainment. On the other hand, television entertainment points to the extra-ordinariness and exclusiveness of the media surrounded by the possibility of attention and the special stardom of the television personality. The result is a kind of self-reflexive television entertainment revolving around television itself, its made-for-television personalities and its contact with the viewers.

The two main conclusions drawn from the programming history also point to the fact that the continuing success of Danish public service entertainment is caused by DR's and TV 2's ability to creatively adapt to developments in commercial television. But again and crucially, adaptation has not resulted in any mere adoption *because of the public service obligations* that ground the legitimacy and activities of the two companies. As stated in the beginning, the cultural consequences have been the creation of a cultural space or sphere where the entertainment programming of Danish public service broadcasting and its potential social cohesive effects is dominated by an *egalitarian value profile* in opposition to an *elitist value profile*.

Egalitarian values in entertainment are, as the programming history shows, leading towards inclusive entertainment. It tries to include everyone and to exclude no one from the atmosphere of sociability, playfulness and belonging that is created. In the programmes, produced egalitarian values in entertainment lead to polite and face saving modes of address and content. The programmes are focusing on and underscoring positive relations between human beings. These shared qualities in egalitarian values evident in PSB entertainment are leading to harmless programming, but that may also mean boring programmes because the evidently attractive dangers of face loss are sacrificed.

At the same time and ironically, *elitist values* in commercial approaches are leading towards exclusive entertainment. Commercial content entertains viewers by making distinctions between people, and by tactics of segregation and separation. Elitist values are playfulness and the staging of interaction engaged in the production of face loss. Because of these qualities, an elitist value profile in entertainment leads to provocative programmes often sharply segmenting audiences. An elitist value profile seldom leads to boredom, but certainly encourages the attractions of embarrassment.

The question is whether the difference between the two value profiles is important to promote, and also creatively challenge, in times of increasing competition and political demands for specific definitions of what public service is in terms of programming policy and genres? It is no doubt essential for the strategy of public service television in Denmark and in a lot of other European countries today that promote a universal-service model, which obviously includes entertainment (EBU, 2003:52). The ability for a universal-service or full-scale model to survive will depend on the ability of PSB

broadcasters to demonstrate a cultural difference by being a *proactive force* in the development of formats for entertainment programming. This creative ability will be extremely important in the future for branding public service television as an alternative to entertainment programming offered by commercial television. In the relationship with viewers, the danger to the universal-service model is to become only a pale reaction of developments in commercial television: doing the same kind of programming, but later and in a more 'politically correct' way that may be quite boring.

Thus, the political legitimacy of public service television has perhaps never been more associated with its ability to represent a difference in terms of programming *if* the universal-service model is to survive in a multi-channel environment.

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Domestically Produced TV-drama and Cultural Commons

Unni From

Domestically produced drama is popular among Danish audiences. Recently long-running series and serials produced by DR¹ have enjoyed very high ratings – 1.200.000 viewers or above. That is exceptional in the Danish context (see annex)² and cannot be explained by quality alone. Another explanation is that human beings in an increasingly globalized world long for (national) community and find this, in part, in domestic dramas exploring historical and contemporary environments. Drama, it will be argued, can be one dimension related to experiencing a sense of cultural commons in terms of a shared frame of reference.

My observations of the Danish series *Taxa* [Taxi] (56 episodes 1997-1999) in text- and reception-analytical perspectives, confirmed that the series discursively constitutes a national audience and addresses a 'Danish' audience rather than 'citizens' or different 'viewer' groups (From, 2003). In addition, my comparative reception-analysis of *Taxi* in Swedish and Danish contexts showed that national perspective is an active frame of interpretation for most people. For example, while Danish respondents ascribed non-cultural and basic human patterns of behavior with a specific 'Danish' meaning, Swedish respondents did not. At the same time, both Swedish and Danish respondents identified with universal conflicts and characters associated with a late-modern lifestyle. The conclusion paradoxically confirms theoretical positions suggesting that cultural, social and national identities are not always – even seldom – the same thing (e.g. Strelitz, 2004), but also that drama can create a varying sense of cultural commons within the public sphere.

I will work with a definition of "cultural commons" in terms of a shared frame of reference within a given community. I regard the "cultural commons" as related to an institutional level and a national paradigm but also dependent on the production and reception of universal themes and genre formulas in a globalized (market) culture. The thesis is that domestic and popular drama productions construct a sense of shared reference – not necessarily shared values or shared national identity, but a meeting point and/or an emotional feeling of being a part of a community.

This chapter elaborates empirically some of the aspects and means by which drama can occasion an articulation of cultural commons. Further, it explores explanations for why audiences might retain a national perspective as a dominating frame of interpretation even though universal or late-modern interpretation frames would be equally relevant. I will argue that institutional policy and political regulations of media in general, combined with press material and a flow of news articles, chronicles, reviews, interviews and portraits, may establish a dominating national paradigm. Through such communicative practice a cultural commons is equated with a national public.

This national paradigm is not to be confused with any nationalistic and chauvinistic sense of the concept. The national as dominating paradigm is rather to be understood as the result of ongoing negotiations about being national in a 'globalized culture' (Tomlinson, 1999). This analysis will disclose how domestically produced drama can potentially be the occasion for a discursively based community grounded in late-modern and reflexive articulations of an active cultural commons. The analysis opens discussion about how drama production is and ought to be part of a strategy of legitimacy for public service broadcasters.

Competition and legitimacy

Due to increased competition, public service broadcasters in Europe experienced a fundamental crisis during the 1990s. This has been described as a complex crises correlation between a general economical crisis, a crisis of legitimacy and a crisis of identity (Søndergard, 1995: 8). In an interview with journalist Anders Bruun (Bruun, 2004), the former Director General of DR, Christian Nissen, argued the public service concept is pressurised from different sides. While the European Commission regards licence fees as a practice that distorts competition, commercial broadcasters and segments of the cultural elite argue that public service broadcasters should make niche programs like opera and ballets which commercial broadcasters find unprofitable. In practice, such argumentation means that public service broadcasting [PSB] would lose crucial aspects of political legitimacy.

Domestic drama is an important instrument to ensure both PSB legitimacy and PSB identity. In this I concur with Judith Franco who argues that across Europe domestic drama has worked as an instrumental strategy in periods when pressure has been exerted by political and commercial environments. Through a comparative analysis of BBC's *Eastenders* and the Flemish series *Thuis*, Franco substantiated that "in times of crisis, the public broadcasters – the BBC and VRT – turned to the socially responsible and culturally specific community soap which offers stable patterns of social relations and hence an image of a stable society. The strategy paid off in terms of ratings, image building and nation building, as both soaps draw on their respective television culture and national imaginary" (Franco, 2001: 467).

Table 1. Programmes and ratings

Title	Broadcaster and year	Rating in 000' (average)
Island Cop	TV2 1997-1998	1.800.000
The Hotel	TV2 2000-2002	700.000
The Defence	TV2 2003-2004	700.000
Taxi	DR 1997-1999	1.200.000
Unit One	DR 2000-2003	1.700.000
Nikolaj and Julie	DR 2002-2003	1.500.000
Better Times	DR 2003-2006	2.500.000

Source: TNS Gallup

In the case of DR the purposive focus on domestic drama has also paid off. Totally commercial, and also partly commercial operators (TV2³), generally have not been able to generate ratings as high as DR for their drama productions (see annex below). For analysis, I focus on the latest drama production, *Better Times*, which has produced high ratings, marketing material and considerable coverage and debate in the press. Investigation shows how drama can be image building and, thereby, a strategy of legitimacy.

Viewer ratings on long running serials and the series in the Danish media system 1997-2004. Since 1951 DR has produced films, series and serials for television that have had high ratings. In the days of monopoly that was not surprising, but what might be surprising is that in the period from 1997 to 2004, DR produced a number of drama shows that all had extremely high viewer-ratings. The series *Taxi* (56 episodes 1997-1999), *Rejseholdet* [Unit One] (32 episodes 2000-2003) and *Nikolaj og Julie* [Nikolaj and Julie] (22 episodes 2002-2003), all produced an average rating of over 1,2 million. The latest serial, *Krøniken* [Better Times] (planned for 24 episodes), has broken all records. It has had viewer-ratings of 2,5 million. Since 1997, DR, for the first time, has been challenged by competing stations to produce fiction shows (Nielsen, 2000). This extended competition, especially from TV2, caused more weight to be placed on mainstream productions and the broadcasters, following American models, have made both the process and visual expression more international and professional. TV2 achieved high ratings (on average of 1,8 million viewers) with the show *Strisser på Samsø* [Island Cop] (12 episodes 1997-1998). However, the latest ongoing series, *Hotellet* [The Hotel] (60 episodes from 2000-2002) and *Forsvar* [The Defence] (29 episodes from 2003-2004), have had an average viewer rating of 700.000. On the other hand, the first episodes of the shows stood out the most with a rating of 1,3 million. The fully commercial broadcaster, TV3, has created a soap opera, *Hvide Løgne* [White Lies] (560 episodes 1998-2001) and a crime show *Skjulte Spor* [Hidden Clues] (16 episodes 2000-2001), addressed to specific target groups. News broadcasts during the week also have high ratings, but at best 800.000

to 900.000 viewers. In week 16 2004, the most popular program on TV2 was the concept quiz, *Who wants to be a Millionaire* with 1.107 000 viewers, while the most popular program on DR1 was the travel show, *Kløvedal i Kina* [Kløvedal in China] with 1.095000 viewers (source TNS Gallup).

The argument I will make is structured in two parts. Firstly, I disclose the theoretical framework and outline how the concept of cultural commons is related equally to political and institutional formulations of the importance of a national perspective, production procedures as well as generic and culturally established conventions that co-determine negotiation of meanings between texts and audiences. The theoretical point is that cultural commons is to be understood as articulations of a sense of both national culture and globalized culture. Secondly, I highlight analytical points from the marketing material distributed by DR as part of the launch of the Danish prime-time serial *Better Times*, and from the press coverage following the premier of the serial. This analysis reveals how this drama production is the occasion of articulating cultural commons as national commons, and investigates how this framework incorporates universal or late-modern issues.

Better Times is a historically based television serial in 24 episodes, written by the author Stig Thorsboe, and directed by, among others, Charlotte Sieling. Sven Clausen is the producer. The series takes place from the 1950's to the beginning of the 1970's and describes four young people and their rebellion against the 'parental' generation, as well as their struggle to create 'good' lives. The historical perspective describes how television made its entry into society and how the welfare state was built. Within its genre, the serial is proper craftsmanship; that is evident in a number of aesthetic and thematic qualities. Moreover, the show has similarities to the serial *Monopoly* (Matador 24 episodes from 1978-81), which achieved mythical status in the consciousness of viewers and critics (for analysis of that serial, see for example Bondebjerg, 1993). *Better Times* was highly promoted through television spots, interviews in News programs, an ambitious homepage and for the first time in Denmark, TV-fiction was promoted through cinema commercials.

The entrance of the global to the local

Both as a serial and in terms of popularity, *Better Times* exposes a contradictory phenomenon about globalization that is discussed by theorists. On the one hand, the formats and visual expressions are becoming internationalized and standardized. On the other, populations are simultaneously trying to trace the originality, uniqueness and authentic definitions of themselves and their cultures. Thus, in the Danish context Henrik Søndergaard (2003)

analyzed how, paradoxically, globalization also means that the national perspective has been strengthened. This national perspective should be interpreted in a non-political sense, however. Based on Gundelach and Billigs use of the concept 'trite nationalism', which refers to a non-political definition of the 'national', Søndergaard suggests the national assignment is not a project of the societal 'elite' but rather a popular orientation towards audiences' requests and needs. The analysis extrapolates the paradox that the more globally oriented the media system becomes the more the programs will be oriented towards audiences' locally anchored 'values'. That is to say, when the majority of television consumers are nationally minded, the programs and program range may play a part in constituting a national audience.

The national audience as phenomenon is also constituted within public service policy, and in the outline of program policy at an institutional level. As a public service institution, DR is required to promote Danish language and culture (see DR's *public service-redegørelse 2003* [DR's public service stipulation], and box below). Implicit in this obligation is the idea that Danish language and culture need protection, conservation and institutions to communicate them. Therefore it could be argued that a potential articulation of cultural commons is not circumstantial – it is a strategic aim.

Public service definition and contract. This public service definition is contracted between DR and the minister of cultural affairs (Brian Mikkelsen) and is in effect from January 1st 2003 to December 31st 2006. The contract states, among other things, that Danish public service broadcasters play "an important part in creating and communicating Danish language and culture, and in this way are indispensable to the democratic debate" (my translations). In regard to program policy the contract highlights news, children's programs, general education and domestically produced drama as important public service broadcasting activities. DR shall continuously produce at least the amount of broadcasting hours as have been average for the last four years (19 hours of prime time Danish drama). The broadcasting of Danish drama should be coordinated between DR and TV2 in order to avoid overlap. The contract moreover contains a paragraph stating that DR is required to strengthen Danish film production. In short this means that DR, on a yearly basis, invests 60 million kr. [approximately €8 million], in films, series, serials, short films, documentaries etc. produced in cooperative enterprise. In DR's own public service broadcasting report, prime time drama is highlighted as an area in which DR aims to put special effort. This means that from 2006 DR will schedule 35 hours of prime time fiction a year (instead of 19 hours mentioned above which has been the average since 1999). The budget for this is 125 millions kr. [approximately € 17 millions] (Nordstrøm, 2004: 42).

At first sight, such formulations are along the lines of John Tomlinson's analysis of the skeptical positions of global culture and the approach of Anthony Smith

(Tomlinson, 1999: 100). Theoretically, such formulations suggest that national cultures, in contradiction to globalized cultures, are “particular, timebound and expressive” (Tomlinson, 1999: 101) and that national cultures are anchored within a fundamental sense of collective identity. This interpretation needs, however, a broader framework if we wish to address the translation of a national perspective with regard to production procedures and the content, reception and circulation of the meaning of TV drama within press material, here termed as the ‘secondary media circuit’ (Fiske, 1987). At an analytical level it is necessary to focus, on the one hand, on how drama productions and viewers expectations of these productions are related to international genre formulas and, on the other, how drama productions and people’s expectations are discursively related to a national or cultural perspective.

On the basis of Todorov’s concepts, the English theorist, Stephen Neale (1983 (1980), 1990), argued that the experience of (mainstream) fiction is related to its *generic verisimilitude* and *cultural verisimilitude* or probability. With this distinction it is possible to think of products as being transnational formats or expressions and at the same time locally, culturally anchored. Generic verisimilitude is used especially with reference to genre and transnational structures. That is the defining characteristics of a specific genre, whether related to aesthetics, form or content: for example, soap by multiple plot lines and sit-coms by canned laughter.

These conventions are transnational because, among other things, global media institutions are buying and selling established program formats. Therefore, one might argue that the more mainstream the generic conventions in the single production the more recognizable to the audience. In this sense domestically produced fiction is related to transnational standards and ascribed to the ‘complex connectivity’ that characterizes a basic understanding of globalization (Tomlinson, 1999). That is how globalization “refers to the rapidly developing and ever-densening network of interconnections and interdependencies that characterize modern social life” (Tomlinson, 1999: 2) where practices of drama production constitute one type of “flow” for goods and knowledge.

Regarding Danish drama, a homogenization has obviously taken place in proportion to the influence of international (American) standards. It was crucial for the quality of DR’s mainstream productions in the mid-1990s that they consulted the producers of an American television series, *N.Y.P.D.-Blue*, when building *Taxi* on that American ‘mainstream’ model.

The concept of cultural verisimilitude references the fact that texts are extrapolated in contextual relations. Their potential for being recognizable is determined by the constant, ongoing negotiation between an audience and the surrounding society regarding what is probable and what is not. This type of negotiation may have a national character, but may also be determined by other factors in cultural communities. If the audience experience that it is unlikely in a Danish soap to have siesta between 12 and 14, this would be an expression of a cultural and a national frame of interpretation

that siesta is not a Danish tradition. But of course within all genres and all texts one may debate that things are culturally probable for some but not necessarily for others. For example, a series taking place in Copenhagen may be perceived probable to people in Helsinki, Zurich or New York but not in the same way to people living in the countryside in any of these countries.

The concept is not necessarily attached to what is 'realistic' or 'authentic', but rather more to the negotiations that decide whether or not something is perceived as recognizable and therefore credible; negotiations in which media play an important role. This can be illustrated by the complex relationship between text, audience, and secondary texts in the form of (for instance) promotional materials, reviews, and letters to the editor, which collectively contribute to creating specific expectation horizons and frames of interpretation for the experience of a television program. The secondary texts create a forum in which both generic and cultural verisimilitude may be negotiated. This phenomenon will be discussed in detail below, after an investigation of the marketing material for *Better Times*.

Communication strategies and prime-time drama

High quality domestically produced drama achieves incomparable ratings. That's one reason it is a priority at DR. But drama productions also strengthen the image of broadcasters because they function as 'auteur' productions related to concepts such as originality, innovation and creativity that potentially create a general belief and trust (Bilteyreyst, 2004) for the specific institution. In the specific case of *Better Times*, DR also tells the (hi)story of the introduction of television in Denmark, and thereby inherently the story of how DR as the first Danish broadcaster united the nation in front of the new phenomenon – Television. Next I shall examine how within the press, *Better Times* (and thereby DR) is constructed as high quality and potentially constructs cultural commonality.

By analyzing *Better Times*, and more specifically DR's introduction of the serial in press releases, it becomes apparent that these materials contribute to establishing generic and cultural verisimilitude. The press material consists of a brief summary of the serial and a contextualization of it to Danish society and history. After the show is historically placed, the press material describes the subordinate characters, the cast by name, and the web page is introduced. The creative staff behind *Better Times* is described by referencing earlier productions in DR's drama department and past triumphs in the movie business. In this way, the context is essential for establishing an expectation horizon for the critics and, in turn, for readers and viewers. The promotional material leverages former successes to establish an expectation horizon of quality television today. DR's image as a strong player in television fiction is thereby secured.

The press material describes the generic form and content of the serial, and the development of the four main characters and their different 'rebellions' against the older generation, across the 24 episodes of the serial. The horizon of expectation is further strengthened in sections consisting of a short sketch of the four young main characters' goals and their struggle to, in different ways, break with the parental generation's traditions and habits. The basic premise of the story and of the main characters is: "How do we find ourselves in a constantly changing world?" (Press material, page 3). In considering this premise, the audience can expect the content to be universal and strongly related to late-modern conditions.

The generic contract produced via the marketing material has, in broad terms, a transnational character rather than a purely locally- or nationally-based character. But the horizon of expectation is also defined in relation to the geographical and cultural area via phrases like "the new Denmark". The linguistic connection between DR1 and DR drama, and this historical based serial telling the history of "the new Denmark", is part of the image-anchoring project: "DR has a strong Danish profile". It attempts to elaborate DR drama as something shared by the broad public – the Danish nation. Drama productions become a prestigious project by telling a shared history. Moreover, the text underlines that it is a serial made by DR1. It is possible to use 'TV Drama' as a trademark because *Better Times* follows long-running series equated with high quality and broad audience appeal.

One of the headlines states that the serial takes place in a "unique period in Denmark" and the paragraphs put weight on developments in Danish society. These form a national perspective and frame of interpretation. Among other things, the press material states: "During the 25 years in which the 24 episodes of *Better Times* take place, Danish society changes fundamentally, as a nation. Back then, 'welfare Denmark' was created, changing family patterns in a way that nobody could have predicted. We join the characters at the beginning of the period, in 1949, joining NATO and at the end of it, in 1972, joining EU. In other words, this is where we started the global world that we live in today."

In the last few phrases, the pronoun 'we' is used. This constructs a connection between the audience and the historical period. It is inclusive, incorporating the audience and the institution as a unity. Furthermore, the quote exemplifies how the 'national' and the 'global' are related. 'We' refers to the 'national community', while the last phrase places the audience – 'us' – in a global world. In this way the global world is focused with a national optic. This national perspective can be interpreted as both a political and an institutional strategy of communication in a competitive market where, especially, domestically produced programs separate public service broadcasters from commercial and transnational broadcasters (Søndergaard, 2003: 114). This strategy of communication is relevant because audiences usually prefer 'Danish' productions (see endnote 2) as they are more recognizable and locally rooted than foreign productions (From, 2003).

However, the press material exposes contrasting interpretations of the concept of cultural identities when comparing the writer with the institution. In the marketing material and various interviews with the press, the writer, Stig Thorsboe, stresses an idea that *Better Times* is a family history – not a national history. “It was not the intention that the occurrences within the serial should be weighed historically. It is not supposed to be a historical chronicle, but a family history chronicle.” Lars Grarup, chief of DR1, on the other hand, interprets the serial within a national framework: “*Better Times* is a perfect example of good television. In a concerned and exhilarating way, the show not only has a good story line about four youth, it also mediates a good and precise insight into the history of Denmark and a time that really influenced who we are today. Audiences are both entertained and educated about Denmark’s history by following the serial.” DR’s public service contract and definition states that DR is required to reflect Danish language and culture within broadcasting and program policy. These formulations may be interpreted as though culture has an essence and the national a deeper sense of identity, although within the translation of these concepts there is possibility to open different interpretations of cultural identity. National identity is also negotiated in correlation with a globalized culture.

Discursive anchoring of communities

The analysis of newspaper coverage⁴ shows that journalists reproduce phrases from the marketing material and thereby often repeat the national perspective. A national discourse is presumed to be a relevant frame of interpretation for the audience. The formatting of cultural commons is highly rooted in a sense of the national, although not exclusively.

Generally, the analysis shows that the character of the articles and the debate changed in the period from the press conference on the 28th of November 2003 till the 10th episode was shown in March 2004. In the beginning, focus was bound with primary texts in attempts to establish a thematic and generic contract. During the time leading up to the broadcast of the first episode, the articles were based on background material and interviews with the main writer who described his work as the story of the four youth and not as a national history. After the generic conventions of the serial were established, however, different debates took shape; debates that had a starting point in the serial but did not necessarily focus on it. There are two crucial features in the articles that then position *Better Times* in a national frame of interpretation through the secondary media circuit. One feature is the common references to the serial *Monopoly*. The other is in the references to viewer ratings.

Monopoly is a prominent issue in the articles. That serial is the most popular show ever created in Denmark. It sold the most VHS and DVD products,

and had the highest ratings ever (3.600.000). Furthermore it is the perfect example of true quality craftsmanship within Danish television for many Danes. Even before *Better Times* was broadcast, *Monopoly*, was an 'easy' comparison prediction. *B.T.*, for example, ran this headline: "They [*Better Times*] will follow the legacy of *Monopoly*." Several note that *Better Times* must live up to the expectations and renowned reputation of *Monopoly*. In *Ekstra Bladet*, on the 6th of January, *Monopoly* was described as "one of the biggest TV successes in Danish history" and the comparison between *Monopoly* and *Better Times* was described as being an "obvious choice". Therefore, *Ekstra Bladet* asked Lise Nørgaard, the writer of *Monopoly*, for a statement: "Lise Nørgaard, 'the mother of *Monopoly*', thinks that *Better Times* is a worthy heir and that it was a pleasure to watch the first episode" (Bentzon, *Ekstra Bladet*, 6th of January, 2004). The legacy-related metaphors are bound to a Danish television success and are also used when one has to describe a nation. For instance, we often talk about the 'mother country' and 'the Danish family' (Jørgensen and Phillipsen, 1999:179). The references to *Monopoly* and the use of family related metaphors constitute the serial in a generic and cultural framework that constructs a sense of a unique Danish tradition – a sort of 'Danish drama family'.

This manifests *Monopoly* as a public frame of reference, even though the writers and producers tried to avoid the comparison by arguing that the visual expression and themes of *Better Times* are completely different. What the serials have in common is the fact that both are historically based and in twenty-four episodes. *Monopoly* finishes in 1946 and *Better Times* takes its point of departure in 1949. The comparison of *Monopoly* and *Better Times* establishes a platform of quality standard and a discussion of authenticity. This latter discussion is interesting in the context and indicates nuances. A key issue is the fact that the historically based serial is generically influenced by a realism tradition. On this basis the audience will value the program's credibility. A number of arguments in press reviews and in 'letters to the editor' are based on trying to find errors and missing pieces in the props and manuscripts. Others are related to the fact that most people feel a high degree of credibility and reliability.

In a more general perspective, the serial and discussion about the importance of drama for historical awareness are obviously participating in actually separating fiction from reality. These discussions create a distance of reflexivity between text and audience. On the other hand, *Monopoly* is, to many Danes, something 'typically' Danish and the references to the show are therefore participating in establishing *Better Times* as 'Danish'. Therefore, it creates the idea that *Monopoly* is creatively based on unique 'Danish' principles and thematic structures.

Another characteristic of press coverage is the mention of high viewer ratings for *Better Times* in almost every article. High ratings imply that the show is extremely relevant to readers and viewers. It is therefore considered a 'news criterion' for the press. At the same time, the mention of rat-

ings underscores the fact that television viewing is, in general, a social activity. This implies that audience is more than just 'me'; it is something *shared*.

John Tomlinson (1999) argued that globalization is constituted within two defining concepts. One is connectivity and the other is proximity. Connectivity relates to the compression of time and space. Proximity relates, among other things, to the 'closeness' of people living in different geographical and cultural contexts but experiencing the same events through television. *Better Times* is obviously not a global phenomenon and does not establish a global proximity. But it can be argued that the highlighting of ratings creates a sense of proximity and, thereby, cultural commonality across regional territories. The correlation between characteristics of the TV medium with the serial and texts in the secondary media circuit, establish consciousness of a public with common interests. Sub-cultural interests are suspended. 'We' have a shared frame of reference and a platform to articulate aspects of cultural community via the synchronized viewing of television on Sundays at 8 p.m.

A number of newspaper articles imply that domestically produced drama may function as a cultural forum (following Hirsch and Newcomb, 1984) and as an exclusive meeting point for exchanging unique values – an argument confirmed by other analyses (Bondebjerg, 1993; Franco, 2001; From, 2003). Headlines like "The Quest for Community" (*Ekstra Bladet* 6th January, 2004), "Seduces the Nation" (*B.T.* 7th January, 2004), and "Images of Denmark" (*Information* 6th January, 2004), indicate that the national perspective should not be isolated as a strategy used only by DR. One also has to take into account that the discursively based national perspective and the national community are reconstructed in the secondary media circuit.

In *Information*, Morten Piil, queries the apparent ongoing need of 'tales from Denmark': "must the Danes see pictures of themselves to believe that they exist?" he asked (6th of February, 2004). Piil disputes the national perspective ascribed to the enormous affiliation with *Better Times* by both audience and press. At the same time, he questions the contrasts between *Monopoly* and *Better Times*, based on the fact that the latter does not have the same degree of authenticity as the former. This is because *Better Times* "does not manage to capture the sedated rhythm of the period – at least not as I saw it back in the fifties. Certainly there were some people that were quite busy back then, but it was a minority (compared to present day) – and it is that minority that *Better Times* producers have chosen to focus on" (Ibid.). Piil accepts here the premise that one can debate the authenticity and representative selections of a nation.

This is an example of how a national interpretation perspective on drama is captured. It is based on establishing a historical expectation horizon for the serial within its generic structure, and then also in the more nuanced discussions of the culturally probable in various newspapers.

Locally anchored views on the global

Domestically produced prime time drama owns the opportunity and capacity for public service broadcasters to articulate, and be the occasion of, cultural commons. Television drama produced according to international standards becomes shared frames of reference even (perhaps especially) in a multi-channel society.

This shared frame of reference is the result of a complex interrelation of texts. The secondary media circuit establishes high quality drama productions as a public phenomenon that operates both as individual experience and as collective articulation in the public sphere. In further research it would be relevant to analyze, for instance, how web sites contribute to the complex intertextuality of drama productions, and how people use these sites to connect their personal stories to construct a sense of collective identity.

Of course other genres are able to get at least as much attention as *Better Times*, especially reality-TV shows. But there is significant difference between the shared reference in domestic drama compared with reality shows. Reality shows emphasize an individualistic worldview and personal values. The secondary media circuit frames interpretation with questions about competition: how well the participants are doing in the show or how well they are negotiating the strategic game. Drama instead takes a collective point of departure and is in that sense based on a different kind of coherence and historical connectivity. This is an important feature in relation to the discussion of drama as a legitimizing project with image-anchoring effects.

DR has chosen to brand DR1 as '*our* channel', putting weight on a full-scale definition of public service. This is contrary to a narrow definition of public service broadcasting as an alternative to mainstream productions provided by commercial broadcasters. With the latest long-running series and serials it can be argued that DR is able to 'service' the 'public' in a broad sense by providing the sort of programs that are unattainable for or from commercial broadcasters, especially in small national markets. Commercial broadcasters cannot often afford expensive domestic drama productions and, for the most part, are more interested in specific target groups than in the general public.

Audiences seem to agree that *Better Times* is a unique production. This helps DR fulfill the regulations on public service broadcasting with a program that commercial broadcasters, at least for the moment, cannot provide. Supporters of a full-scale definition of public service, as well as those who think public service should provide what commercial broadcasters do not, can agree that domestic drama of high quality has a unique status and a crucial, even pivotal, legitimizing function. Moreover audiences remember high quality drama. One may forget the latest news broadcast, but *Better Times* seems to stick in one's memory. In that sense the image and identity of the institution is linked to artistic experience.

This chapter has investigated empirical foundations of the concept of a cultural commons as a complex relation between national and global perspectives. Press material and press coverage establish generic and cultural frames of interpretation that anchor the serial within universal formulas but also construct a sense of specific and shared cultural community. Thus, the national paradigm seems to be dominating in the constitution of the serial in public discussion and in coherent social reality. The national discourse is used as a communication strategy in the press material in an attempt to gather audiences and unite them. This is reproduced and extended in the secondary media circuit. Now it is up for debate if this strategy is too conservative and regressive in the global world that is our shared social reality (Søndergaard, 2003:123). If and when the answer confirms that point of view, what can be done to refocus from a national perspective to a more global perspective of cultural commons?

Notes

1. Danish broadcasting Company (DR): Public service organization – fully license financed public institution. DR Radio has four FM channels: P1, P2, P3 and P4 (nine regional stations). DR TV comprises two channels, DR 1 and DR 2. DR was founded in 1951. DR 2 was founded in 1996. DR has transmitted radio and TV on the Internet since 1996/1997.
2. Domestically produced TV-fiction has usually higher ratings than imported TV-products within the same genre and of similar quality. An exception to the rule might be American 'blockbusters' that get as high ratings as for example, *The Defence*, broadcasted by TV2. *Saving Private Ryan* (movie by Steven Spielberg from 1998 broadcasted on TV2 the 11th of April 2004 at 8pm with approximately 790.000 viewers) and *Tomorrow Never Dies* (James Bond movie by Roger Spottiswood from 1997 broadcasted on DR1 the 10th of April 2004 at 8.50pm with approximately 806.000 viewers) were, in the period from the 1st of March to 18 of April, the foreign movies with highest ratings.
3. TV2 is a public service channel financed by a combination of license fees and advertising. It was founded in 1988 and organized as an enterprise system. TV2 comprises eight regional stations and introduced in 2000 the satellite channel Zulu and in 2004 the satellite channel Charlie.
4. The analysis is based on articles on *Better Times* in the period from the 28th of November 2003 (press conference) to March 2004. The articles were published in *Berlingske Tidende*, *Jyllands-Posten*, *Politiken*, *Information* (national newspapers), *Ekstra Bladet* or *BT* (tabloids) and are gathered by a search in the database 'Infomedia'. Method-wise, one may be reserved that there is no information regarding how the articles are coded and if they are all there. In the newspaper database, the articles are gathered from the following papers, magazines, and information bureaus: *Berlingske Tidende*, *Jyllands Posten*, *Politiken*, *Information*, *Ekstra Bladet*, *BT*, *Weekendavisen*, *Aktuelt*, *Fyens Stiftstidende*, *Vejle Amts Folkeblad*, *Fredericia Dagblad*, *Flensborg Avis*, *ErbvervsBladet*, *Børsen*, *Reuters*, *Ritzau*, *Nybedsmagasinet*, *Computerworld*, *Ingeniøren*, *Kommunal Bladet*, *It Branchen*, *Dagens Medicin*, *Danmarks Amtsråd*, *Markedsføring*, *Press*, *Universitetsavisen*, *Fondsbørsresuméer*, *Købmandstanden*. The number of articles published in the tabloids are higher (*Ekstra Bladet* and *B.T.*), compared to the number of articles published in the larger national newspapers. This is, of course, due to the fact that these newspapers value entertainment and 'light news' differently and that the analysis also includes 'letters to the editor' and debate entries which make out a great part of the material about *Better*

Times in the tabloids. Relatively, there are a lot of articles published in *Politiken*, *Berlingske Tidende* and *Jyllands-Posten* which has to do with the fact that over the past decade, newspapers have put an increased emphasis on human-interest topics and content that traditionally has been covered by weeklies (Jauert and Prehn, 1997: 24). *Information* has published the lowest number of articles on *Better Times* and the articles in the newspapers have been more debate-oriented than gossip-based. This makes sense considering their 'elite' profile. Content wise, the analysis show, for instance, that the different types of newspapers have different focus points. Simplified, it is not surprising that the tabloids are more focused on both ordinary and 'famous' people's opinions on and interest in *Better Times* while the large national newspapers may focus on the discussion of the potential political effect *Better Times* could have. Furthermore, the extrapolating of a national reference frame seems clearer in the tabloids and has clearly a less debatable nature than in the more 'elite' newspapers.

Annex

Newspaper	Number of articles as object of analysis. All articles have <i>Better Times</i> as primary object.	Total amount of articles containing the word 'Better Times'
Berlingske Tidende	23	90
Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten	30	72
Politiken	34	101
Information	12	32
B.T	62	152
Ekstra Bladet	68	154

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The Everyday Construction of Mediated Citizenship

People's Use and Experience of News Media in Denmark

Kim Christian Schrøder & Louise Phillips

In recent decades under the influence of deregulation, news journalism in Denmark – as in other European countries – has become more audience-oriented as the competition for viewers, listeners and readers has intensified. This development has been particularly evident in electronic media, not least television which, until the 1980s, was characterised in many countries by the monopoly of public channels with a classic public service obligation oriented towards the dissemination of quality news and ‘good taste’.

Under such conditions, audiences had little choice but to accept the public-education philosophy underlying broadcast policy in these countries, however much they – especially those with limited (short) educational backgrounds – may have resented news that was difficult to understand because it presupposed a viewer with a considerable amount of educational capital. Because of this, the movement towards tabloidization that took place in print journalism more than a century ago and in radio journalism after World War II only reached television, and with a vengeance some would say, since the 1980s when deregulation and technological innovation paved the way for channel competition both across and within national borders.

Studies of the development of political news journalism in Denmark and other countries since the 1960s have pointed to an increased audience-orientation of news communication, characterised by the following developments (Hjarvard, 1999; Dahlgren & Sparks, 1996; Sparks & Tulloch, 2000; Fairclough, 1995; Corner, 2000; Mazzoleni et al., 2003):

- Increased *personalization* of political news, manifesting itself as a focus on political personalities rather than political substance and vision.
- Increased *trivialization* (by some called ‘dumbing down’) of the news, as ‘soft’ news becomes a staple of many primetime news programs.
- Increased ‘*celebritization*’ of the news, as the above developments erase the boundaries between agents from the different public realms, creating one sphere of public visibility for politicians, actors, musicians, sports stars, etc.

- Increased presence of a '*journalism of the everyday*', as the reporting of political decisions has often adopted the perspective of 'the ordinary person' in order to assess the implications of new legislation. This so-called '*journalism of consequences*' has often been claimed to lead to an:
- Increased *populism* of political coverage, as the news increasingly pits 'the people' against 'the politicians' or 'the system', separated by a gulf of mutual mistrust.
- Increased *acceleration* of delivery and visual effects, as seen in 'soundbite' mania and dynamic camera and editing techniques.
- Increased *conversationalization* of the oral presentation of news, with adoption of the popular idiom in monological newsreader formats, and informal conversational styles in interview and debate formats.

Based on this diagnosis of the drift of television's news discourses, there has been widespread concern among researchers in political communication who have generalized such discursive developments into a worrisome verdict on the general health of the public sphere and democracy as such:

It is meaningful to speak about a public sphere that does exist today, but by any standard of evaluation it is in a dismal state. (...) While popularization can and has been in many cases a positive development, bringing more people into the public sphere, by most accounts today popularization is degenerating into trivialization and sensationalism. The ideals of journalism are increasingly subordinated to the imperatives of the market. (...) What we are faced with is a serious erosion of civic engagement. We have a crisis of civic culture and citizenship, which can be linked to a more pervasive cultural malaise. (Dahlgren, 2001)

As the study reported here indicates, however, it is far from clear whether our democracies are actually threatened to the extent claimed, and what role the media play for the democratic literacy of the citizenry.

One difficulty with sweeping generalizations about the detrimental role of the news media in democratic processes is the *question of scope*. It often appears as if all countries in the Western hemisphere are afflicted by the "malaise", and equally affected by the "erosion of civic engagement". On closer inspection of specific countries, there may turn out to be important differences between the US, Britain, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, etc., depending on the intermixture of respective political and media systems.

A second problem resides in the *concept of politics* used as the lens for assessing the situation. While in some countries, undoubtedly, involvement in parliamentary politics has diminished, in some countries (if not all) this disenchantment with traditional party politics has been accompanied by a significant growth in the sub-politics of grassroots movements and NGOs (Eide

& Knight, 1999; Phillips, 2000). Similarly, there has been an increasing politicization of consumption, manifesting itself in a widespread willingness to penalize corporations that disregard environmental concerns, ethical norms and human rights.

Thirdly, there is a problem with the *indirect evidence* offered by media scholars in support of the diagnosis. Most of the evidence so far has not come from empirical fieldwork looking at citizens as users of mediated political news, but rather from political-economy oriented media research that sees this development as the sad but inevitable outcome of media competition and concentration, manifesting itself in the need to pander to the lowest common denominator. Meanwhile, content and discourse analytical studies have demonstrated the occurrences that characterize tabloid news, as mentioned above. Then – often in knee-jerk cultural pessimist fashion – the combined results of these kinds of media and political analyses have been offered as the causal explanation of the “erosion of civic engagement”.

Another way of seeing

Dissenting, and more optimistic, voices have also been heard in scholarly and political debates, emphasizing the democratically enabling consequences of popularization and tabloidization (Delli Carpini & Williams, 2001; Eide & Knight, 1999; Street, 2000; van Zoonen, 1998 & 2003). Van Zoonen, for example, sees the audience-friendly strategies of recent popular journalism as an attempt to heal a weakened democracy, as a way to rebuild a sense of community and shared concerns between distant politicians and an estranged electorate. But such voices are few and far between, and have been marginal in the overall picture.

This chapter reports from a study of mediatized politics that tries to remedy the three deficits of mainstream media research about the media/citizen nexus. It does so, first, by particularizing the issue, i.e., by locating the study within one particular national context (Denmark). The scope of *our* generalisations, therefore, is within one clearly defined national entity where generalization about media use and experiences are made in relation to a particular configuration of political system and media system.

Secondly, while we are ultimately interested in understanding the conditions of mediated politics, our study does not privilege politics in the traditional sense but instead takes its point of departure in the life-world context of ordinary citizens for whom ‘politics’ is merely one concern among many as they navigate in, and make sense of, everyday lived experiences.

Thirdly, our study does not derive its insights indirectly from the analysis of media organizations and businesses, or from media discourses. We gather evidence from the way citizens talk to each other and to us about everyday life, news media and politics in the context of informal focus groups.

The study was one project among many carried out with funding from the Danish Parliament's large-scale investigation of power and democracy (1999-2004). The aim of our study was to 1) illuminate the citizens' use of news media in everyday life, and 2) to explore possible bi-directional interdependencies between the media's and citizens' political orders of discourse (Phillips & Schrøder, 2004). This chapter reports on the first aim, assessing a focus group study with the aim of illuminating the ways in which citizens use news media as resources for the acquisition of democratic prerequisites in everyday life.

Conceptual and methodological framework

The title of our Danish monograph (translated to English) is *This is how media and citizens talk about politics: A discourse-analytical study of politics in the mediatized society*. Our discourse-analytical framework for exploring citizens' **talk** about media and politics is based on a combination of two social-constructivist approaches to discourse analysis: the approach usually associated with Norman Fairclough called 'critical discourse analysis' (Fairclough, 1992, 1995 & 2003), and the approach usually associated with Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell called 'discursive psychology' (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Potter & Wetherell, 1996).

Both approaches are based on the assumption that talk is central to the formation of our social world: Our ways of talking are organized in discourses that do not merely mirror our surrounding world with its power structures, social relations and identities, but instead play an active role in creating and changing them. We use discourses to create representations of reality, while the representations are, in turn, constitutive of reality (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Discourses are ways to give meaning to aspects of the world, whereby other ways of seeing become less plausible and natural, marginalized or even excluded (Foucault, 1972). Thus what *the media* 'are' for people depends on how people construct their media use and experiences in language for themselves, and in dialogic negotiations with others. Likewise, *politics* is what people construct *as* 'politics' in such sense-making processes within specific situational and societal contexts.

It is therefore important to see discourses as both *structures* that frame and thereby constrain our sense-making processes, and simultaneously as *resources* that are enabling and change-oriented. We thus live in a sea of discourses that frame our notions of a phenomenon like 'politics', but at the same time discourses have an inherent creative potential that can change established notions of 'politics'. This dual nature is illustrated in the actual changes in understandings of politics in recent decades, where sedimented conventional understandings that limited politics to the area of parliamentary affairs have been dissolved and extended by taking in – and talking in

– wider forms of political practice, such as subpolitics and life politics (Giddens, 1994; Beck, 1994).

For our focus group analysis we used both approaches because they supplement each other as analytical tools (Schröder, 2002). Fairclough's critical discourse analysis is useful for the detailed, linguistic micro-analysis of people's representations of social reality, while Potter & Wetherell's discursive psychology has greater explanatory power when it comes to analysing the dynamic interplay between social actors involved in the mutual negotiation of social meanings. However, the account below will show few traces of the actual discourse-analytical process as we instead concentrate on the reporting and discussion of findings about how people discursively make sense of their life with media.

The aim of the focus group study (January 2002) was to encourage participants to talk about how they keep informed about what goes on in society at local, national, and international levels. How do people ensure that they get the information that is necessary, important, and relevant for them to function in daily life? What media and, in the case of television, what programmes do they use most for these purposes? And how do people experience the media or programmes they use the most – why do they prefer them to others? What do they think about them? And what do they think about media or programmes they rarely or never use? What matters most: content, style or participants? The overall perspective underlying all these questions was our desire to illuminate how the different media and programmes can be seen to function as prerequisites for people's practices as enlightened citizens in a contemporary democratic society.

We talked to seven groups with a total of 30 participants. Two groups were network groups where the participants knew each other in advance because they were neighbours or friends. Five groups were composed of people with no prior knowledge of each other. All the groups were homogeneous with respect to educational level (short = maximum 10 years, skilled or unskilled worker) vs. long education (academic degree). This served as the main demographic variable due to its established importance as a divider of taste and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984; Slaatta, 2003). All groups were also relatively homogeneous with respect to age (18-25 years vs. 35-50 years), but mixed with respect to gender and occupation.

The group sessions consisted of two stages. First an opportunity for participants to talk freely and in general terms about their everyday use of media for local, national and international news, triggered by our selection of 25 newspapers and magazines spread out on the table and by a videotape with 10 short jingle sequences from well-known news and current affairs programmes across six channels. The second stage was organized around 5 excerpts from well-known TV programs¹:

- DR1 *The TV Times*, 7 Jan 2002, news story about the privatization of railways by the new liberal-conservative government.

- TV 2 *The News*, 7 Jan 2002, news story with the same topic.
- TV 2 *Breakfast TV*, 8 Jan 2002, interview with the state railway chairman.
- DR1 *19Direct*, no date 2000, 'public journalism' current affairs programme labelled 'news at eye level', story and phone-in about negligence in old people's homes.
- DR2 *The Debate*, 10 Jan 2002, studio debate about the new government's proposal to privatise public housing.

Most of the groups also included a discussion of the celebritization of the media because a young female minister's recent nomination by a gossip magazine as "Chick of the year", and the new Prime Minister's appearance on a late-night talk show, were on the public agenda at the time of the focus groups.

How citizens use and experience the media – two illustrative examples

Before we present our generalized findings from the study, it is natural, in accordance with our discourse-analytical framework, to give readers a taste of how our informants actually constructed their daily life with the (news) media in talk. Let's begin with an excerpt showing how members of one of the short education groups (35-50 years) negotiate their everyday routines with the media:

Palle: I just want to say that Text-TV, and also the Internet for that matter, have some incredibly skilled journalists who give you just what the story is about, while the daily newspapers – by the way, the *TV Times* is also very good, they also get to the point right away – but the newspapers they go on endlessly for pages and pages until they get to the point, don't they.

Esben: As regards the news I want to be broadly informed about, like what interests me. Well, I think there was a time when you had the time to sit down for a while and read one of those major newspapers, read stories and articles about some interesting topic, you see, (...) but on a normal day there's just no time for that. There is no time to immerse oneself in a story, on an ordinary day, there just isn't.

Palle: No, it's just a waste of paper, such a Sunday newspaper (*Lisbeth:* Yes), that's for sure.

Interviewer: Do any of you watch mmm, on DR, what they call the *News Hour* from 9 to 10 every night, where first there's the newscast proper, then follows *Horizon*, or *Profile of the Week*, or *The Money Magazine*, and the rest of them?

Henriette: Sometimes we watch it (*Esben:* Yes), not always. *Horizon* is usually quite interesting, with its untraditional angles on the news stories, when they

go behind the scenes sometimes and dig up something that you wouldn't normally get on the news. But *The Money Magazine* and the rest of them don't really interest me at all, I have to admit.

Interviewer: What about *Profile of the Week*, do you watch that?

Esben: No.

Palle: Well (with a groan), normally *Profile of the Week* is on one night, and the next day it's *The Money Magazine*, but I wouldn't watch them really. If we have planned something else that's boring, I really prefer that.

(Group 6)

For these short-educated participants the main concern is to be able to obtain an overview of what's in the news on a daily basis. They want news that is to the point without details they consider unnecessary and irrelevant. The reasons for this news preference are explained by a lack of time and a lack of interest for in-depth news background. For this reason they routinely watch a daily 20-minute public service news programme and supplement this with Text-TV and Internet news. A newspaper is just not considered a part of the news menu.

The contrast with participants with long education (35-50 years) is striking:

Interviewer: How does one keep up with what goes on in Denmark then?

Carsten: Mmm, well, I mean first of all it's the national newspapers, I think. And then I follow the TV news and also those programmes that go more into depth, you see. There you don't get breaking news of course, but they cover different themes where you get a bit below the surface. And then journals of course. Some of them I read when I'm at work, for example *Monday Morning* (a news analysis magazine), they often have articles that I find interesting. (...) I usually get through *Politiken* (national broadsheet) at some point during the day, but we only subscribe to it during weekends.

Vibeke: Mmmm I believe that *Jyllands-Posten* (national broadsheet) is very good. We normally subscribe and it gives you a good impression of what goes on all over Denmark. And then obviously *The TV Times*, it covers things quite well. (...)

Ida: *Politiken* is my daily newspaper, obviously, and then I often but not always watch the news on both (public-service) TV channels. They *are* different, I think. And then there's DR2, but that can get a bit heavy, I think, so I lean more towards the TV2 *News* then. We subscribe to *Weekendavisen* (one weekly edition, culture, political analysis, background, intellectual) on weekends, which I like a lot. It is great for culture and background. And then I use different media depending on the time of day. In the morning it is *Københavns Radio* (music and service radio), but during the day it's often P1 (quality talk radio). (...)

Martin: We have changed our habits since they launched *MetroXpress* (daily morning, free tabloid on buses and commuter stations). After that we actually cancelled our weekday subscription to *Politiken*, but we still get it on week-

ends. Somehow that newspaper has more going for it in its weekend editions. It's a very good newspaper mmm, and then I get *Weekendavisen*, I get a subscription for it as a Christmas present every year. But we read *MetroXpress*, which my partner brings home every day, actually I like it a lot, it's a very sensible paper. (...) And then there's those late news hours on either DR1 or TV2, or the one that's almost always late, mmm *Deadline* (*Ida*: Yes), I like that a lot, it sort of gathers everything together. That's how I manage to keep up, primarily. And then there's radio – I am a *heavy* listener!
(Group 4)

It is clear that these citizens have the cultural capital that it requires to use a wide and varied diet of heavier media and genres. To be well-informed matters to them, which means having a broad overview but also to immerse oneself in the background and context of political and cultural stories on the news agenda. They therefore *make time* in daily life for a news diet that allows them to maintain the identity of informed citizen. There are some indications, however, that the daily broadsheet newspaper which is a must for some, is coming under increasing pressure as the aggregate media ensemble appears to be able to satisfy the informative needs without this time-honoured vehicle.

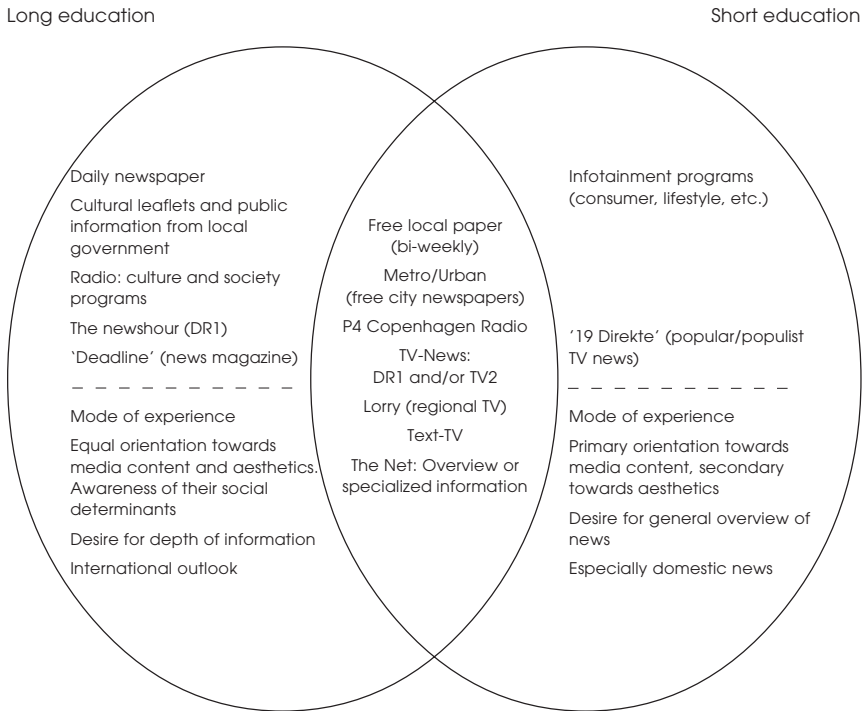
How citizens use and experience the media – generalised empirical findings

The generalised findings of our empirical explorations can be summarized in Figure 1, which divides the media into three main categories:

- the media that are mainly used by those with long education
- the media that are mainly used by those with short education
- the media used by both long- and short-educated people alike, in similar or different ways.

For each of the two educational groups, the diagram specifies first the media and programmes that make up their news diet and secondly their mode of experiencing these media. In the following we shall present in some detail the media use and experience profile found through our focus group conversations. The media exposure patterns delineated in the diagram have grown out of our analysis, and they turn out to correspond fairly closely with existing media statistics (Fridberg, 2000). But the most interesting aspect of the analysis in this context is not the fact that these groups use a certain configuration of media, but rather their discursive construction of why they use the media they use, what they say they use them for, and how they assess the content and form of the different media, genres and programmes.

Figure 1. Citizens and media in everyday life: Media preferences and modes of experience for informative media



Media use and experience profile: Short-Educated citizens

The media use of the short-educated [short-ed] citizens is driven by a *desire for overview* of societal affairs, especially at the local and national levels, if less so at the international level. The purpose underlying this desire for overview – which we could call ‘agenda-getting’ – is that they see this as a prerequisite for participation in different social communities from the micro to the macro level. They often phrase this as a need to “join in” when family members, neighbours and colleagues talk about what is going on around them. The need to keep up with politics is not mentioned as a purpose in its own right – political affairs are simply a constitutive part of the public agenda that one must keep up with.

In order to fulfil their needs for *local information* in the city of Roskilde, the short-ed groups rely overwhelmingly on the local free newspaper distributed to every household twice a week (Wednesday and Saturday). The free newspaper is genuinely appreciated because of its perceived generous provision of local information. For some the paper is supplemented by commercial local radio as part of the morning rituals in the home and while driving to work, but this radio channel is regarded as secondary because its cover-

age of the local universe is more coincidental and less detailed. Very often people mention the down-to-earth purpose of being able to navigate adequately in the practical contexts of daily life as a result of learning about weather and traffic reports, as well as other local events of a commercial, cultural or political nature.

The city of Roskilde is situated approximately 30 kilometres from Copenhagen. For this reason people to some extent perceived the greater Copenhagen area as their 'local' area and mention the metropolitan free dailies (*MetroXpress* and *Urban*), the metropolitan public service radio channel (*Københavns Radio P4*), and the regional TV station (*TV2 Lorry*) as media of importance for *local orientation*. Many people commute and use the free papers or radio as an opportunity to immerse themselves in a mediated social universe on their way to and from work.

These 'local' media also provide an opportunity to take in information about national and international affairs because their news coverage reaches quite extensively beyond the local. Especially public service radio, which is used as a routine morning ritual and also as a constant background medium throughout the day, appears to be a main source among short-eds for constant updating about a wide range of social and cultural affairs. As an almost invisible medium in many everyday contexts, radio thus serves an important democratic function.

At the level of *national orientation* the short-eds make a point of watching one major newscast on one of the public service channels every day. Which channel they watch is less important, although they individually prefer the news style of one over the other. As before, the purpose is to create an overview of the national public agenda. Thus, unlike those with long-education [long-ed], the short-eds do not follow a functional differentiation between the need for overview and the need for depth in their pursuit of social knowledge. Some appear to be on a daily quest for continuous updating with news, moving from one medium to the next through the day. This quest for updating, which they curiously often label as "a search for depth", essentially consists in the successive consultation of news summary-oriented sources, such as the morning radio news, the free newspaper, the evening TV news, and perhaps a late-night check on the internet. It is striking that no consideration is given to the possibility of obtaining depth from a classic broadsheet newspaper. For most short-eds, the daily newspaper does not appear at all on their news agenda – it is superfluous.

We were surprised to find that both Text-TV and internet news play a substantial role in their quest for overview. With what seems like a news-hungry restlessness, many check Text-TV news several times a day to see if something has happened. Many who do not use the computer for work are anyway quite internet-literate, and use the internet to search for general news. For a few, the internet serves their need for depth in the more genuine sense of the word when they seek detailed information about a leisure interest, for example.

The short-eds are very keen to learn about the consequences of politics for ordinary people. They like to watch TV programmes (the following examples are all broadcast by public service channels) that simultaneously occupy both sides of the information/entertainment divide – categories that they by no means accept when they spontaneously mention light current affairs programmes like *Rene Ord for Pengene* (a critical consumer programme), *Hammerslag* (a quiz programme about real estate prices), and *What is it Worth?* (an antiques evaluation programme) – as programmes that bring relevant and important knowledge. They cherish the daily popular current affairs programme *19Direct*, which the producers call “news at eye level”. It describes for ordinary people the consequences of legislation and administrative procedures, lets ordinary people present their version of the story, and is a consistently ‘expert-free zone’. The short-ed groups spontaneously mention this program as a rewarding one, and the way they talk about it reveals that it provides an essential part of the knowledge platform they need in order to participate in political dialogues and discussions with family, friends and colleagues on a daily basis.

Intellectual critics of such programs have claimed that they celebrate populism in a way that should be a cause for democratic concern because they simplistically pit the (often reactionary) common sense truths of ordinary people against a distant ‘system’ and arrogant politicians. Our detailed examination of people’s experience of *19Direct* shows that, contrary to this fear, the different relevance structure of this program appears to promote a fairly complex democratic discussion. The short-ed viewers do not simply take over the populist premise of the programme format; instead they rely on their own everyday experiences, on their critical insight into journalistic sensationalism, and their knowledge obtained from other media and programmes, to enter into a negotiation with programme meanings that nuances or contradicts the populist tendency.

Turning to the *mode of experience* that characterizes the media experiences of the short-eds, we find that they are primarily oriented towards media content. A TV news item is primarily assessed in relation to the elements of the story, and oriented towards the establishment of the facts of the case: Is it reasonable, for instance, that train company CEO Henrik Hassenkam should step down after his company lost a bid to run the regional railways? Has the minister of transport acted decently in this matter, or should he be called to order by the prime minister?

However, this focus on the story does not mean they ignore the formal aesthetic aspects of the news: They also make comments about the way the story is put together, whether it is factual or sensational and, if they watched the same story on two channels, whether the news angles were different.

Our focus group interviews thus show that the short-eds meet the TV news with a critical eye (see further below). The focus group context probably makes people more analytically and critically active than they would be watching TV at home in the living room, but on the other hand the focus

groups show that people do possess critical repertoires for negotiating the political sense-making offered to them by the media.

Media use and experience profile: Long-Educated citizens

The media use of the long-eds is dually motivated by the desire for *overview and depth*. As for the short-eds, the collection of information from the media is necessary to be able to function in the social communities to which one belongs (agenda-getting).

At the *local level* this means reading the two weekly editions of the local free newspaper. But in contrast to the short-eds, this paper is used for lack of a better alternative and with a strongly critical eye. It is remarkable, perhaps, that the long-eds do not see the local daily as an attractive alternative. They simply dismiss it on the grounds that its coverage of Roskilde affairs is too limited: It is not a local but rather a regional newspaper, whose first section is devoted to national and international news (which they already get in their national daily or from TV), while the second section offers 1-2 pages for each of six or seven local areas within the region. In other words they would be paying the price for the whole paper but are only interested in reading the two Roskilde pages. It is therefore not seen as value for money compared to what they get for free in the bi-weekly paper. Local commercial radio holds no appeal for them, so their morning rituals are accompanied by the regional public service channel, *København's Radio P4*, where they get the hourly national news as well.

What the long-eds miss in these local media is decent information about local cultural events and in-depth information from municipal and county governments about political and administrative affairs. To fill the cultural need they turn to cultural leaflets and posters, while the political needs are satisfied by actively acquiring the informative material about local planning proposals, building regulations, traffic investments and health care that is produced for the citizens by municipal authorities. Significantly, the local library is here mentioned as the self-evident information centre where one can pick up such information during regular visits.

The long-eds like the new free dailies that are available to commuters, *MetroXpress* and *Urban*. They typically use these papers for their first overview of the *national* media agenda, which they will then explore in greater depth through a broadsheet newspaper, television, or the internet later in the day (as we saw in the excerpt above). Some subscribe as a routine habit to a national newspaper, which they like to relax with after work. But others have cancelled their subscription or limited it to weekend coverage only.

The most common way to achieve sufficient information depth is to watch two or more public service TV news programmes. Many watch one of the early evening newscasts on either of the public service channels, but nevertheless return to one channel's nine o'clock news or the other's ten o'clock

news, or both. Many follow DR1's 9-10 p.m. newshour, which includes a 25 minute news programme followed by a solid daily current affairs magazine about either consumer affairs, foreign affairs, the money market, or profile of the week, ending with 10 minutes of sports. Some continue into DR2's late-night news and debate programme, *Deadline*, from 11 to 11.30 p.m. During the day some listen to intellectual culture and society programmes on Radio 1, and many regularly use the news sites offered by the big national newspapers for updating the main news or for immersion into topics of special interest.

Unlike the short-eds, the news universe of the long-eds is also oriented towards the *international level* community outside Denmark and also Europe. For some, the information provided by Danish media in this area is supplemented with international news channels like CNN and BBC World, including their websites.

What the long-eds demand most from their news providers is factual knowledge and thoroughness. Because education is to some extent a metaphor for social class, they dissociate themselves quite strongly from the kind of everyday journalism offered by light current affairs programmes for lower-class audiences (such as *19Direct*), because they see them as emotional and superficial. In principle they salute the democratically enabling purpose of setting up a TV forum for people who find it difficult to gain access to the media due to lack of education or self-confidence. But they seem to instinctively resent the way in which this programme orchestrates a popular indignation over social issues that have been taken out of their social context, and thereby pillories politicians for social problems with complex causes. The difference between the ways short-eds and long-eds evaluate *19Direct* can be summed up through two different labels they use to describe the program. The short-eds perceive *19Direct* as televised 'letters-to-the-editor', i.e. a program that belongs to a democratically respectable genre that citizens may use to express their views in the public forum. The long-eds perceive *19Direct* as a televised 'agony column', i.e. a program in the tradition of 'low-quality' women's entertainment magazines where an individual can raise issues that may be personally urgent but have little public relevance.

The *mode of experience* of those with long education is spontaneously analytical and oriented towards the media's aesthetic and formal properties. The local free newspapers are used as sources of information, but criticized for their inadequate information and their poor journalistic quality. When they comment on TV news items they focus both on their information value and on their visual and linguistic properties (genre, shot composition, narrative style), with a clear awareness that their version of reality is a product of journalistic and aesthetic choice. Often the long-ed groups express an awareness of how developments in the media market or in the general society impinge on developments in media relations and communicative forms. Thus, people comment on the possible long-term effects of the emergence of *MetroXpress* on the Danish newspaper market; on the causal relation

between the emergence of tabloid television and the declining readership for tabloid newspapers; and on the way lifestyle-conscious individuals use their media consumption to build a desired personal identity. The sense-making processes of the long-eds around media are therefore characterised by deeper critical reflection about the media/society nexus.

Implications for media policy and journalistic practice

Having now presented the main findings from our fieldwork study of how Danish citizens use and make sense of the media, we turn to the question of what we can claim to have learnt about mediated citizenship. Obviously with our seven focus groups, our findings cannot be generalized to be representative in a strict sense of the Danish population as a whole. Nevertheless, in the absence of previous studies of its kind we believe that our study has generated insights of considerable importance for the way we conceptualize the interplay between media and citizens, and thus for the way we evaluate the role played by the media in democratic processes.

In the following pages we shall ask – while we await the results of further empirical research – what the implications of our study could be for the evaluation of the current condition of the public sphere? Our discourse-analytical findings appear to offer a corrective to verdicts such as Dahlgren's (2001) that the public sphere is “in a dismal state” and that we face a “crisis of civic culture and citizenship”. At the end of the chapter we take a brief look at another recent study, based on a survey of citizen's political practices, of the health of the Danish public sphere.

Through our focus group conversations we can see the contours of citizen's uses of the media that appear to live up to the minimum requirements of democratic participation, and for most of the participants considerably more than that. The participants, whom we regard as typical of large sections of the Danish population, are generally well-informed about what goes on socially, politically and culturally in society. They possess extensive *knowledge repertoires* which they can draw on in their appropriation and contextualization of the information offered by the media. They also have elaborate *aesthetic repertoires* that enable them to meet the media constructions of social reality with a critical distance, even if we have found considerable differences in this respect between short-ed and long-ed groups.

As regards the current *provision of media* in Denmark, our group conversations indicate that all citizens are able to fulfil their perceived needs for information required in everyday life and for democratic purposes. As far as we can see, there is no obvious need in the Danish public sphere for new media offers to readers, viewers and listeners, except for the gradual adjustment to changing social and cultural conditions that media organizations always have to make in their product development. The example of the recent

successful emergence of the free dailies, *MetroXpress* and *Urban*, shows that every now and again niches in the media market will be constructed or discovered that can then be cultivated as attractive new media products for various groups (in this case: urban commuters). Conversely, the failure of the new quality daily *Dagen*, launched in the autumn of 2002 (although the reasons were complex) may serve as an example that there was no need among long-educated business executives and intellectuals for the kind of constructive, internationally-oriented, in-depth news the editors had assumed. Apparently the existing supply of quality newspapers and quality TV and radio news programmes was already sufficient.

Any evaluation of the Danish news market must now also take into account the growing readiness of large sections of the Danish population to supplement a staple diet of Danish media with English and American ones. Many Danes, especially the younger generations, have a sufficient command of English to be able to draw on various international media in English in order to satisfy their need for both overview- and depth media. In our study, the world wide web and various news channels (CNN, BBC World) have become unobtrusive elements in the news diet of many, including quite a few among the short-ed. The supply of print media in English on the shelves of news agents in such areas as lifestyle, sports, computers and computer games, science and politics, shows there are sizable groups in Denmark for whom English is not a barrier to knowledge. Consequently, assessments of the democratic enlightenment of the Danish population must include the extent to which Danes draw on news sources in English.

Our study indicates that internet-based media play an increasing though different role for short- and long-educated groups. Many informants have internet access and navigate smoothly on the net, seeking general news as well as depth- and specialist-information. We have no basis for making solid predictions about a successful future net-based democracy, but can question the cultural pessimism about the democratic potential of the internet found in some quarters:

The economics and cultural competencies required to become an on-line citizen will prevent the Net from becoming genuinely universal far beyond the foreseeable future. (...) The 'cyberspace divide' may well prove to be a key issue regarding the social grounds of citizenship. The growing gap between the information haves and have-nots in the digital age threatens to become a serious destabilizing factor for democratic life (Dahlgren 2001).

It would seem that such pessimistic predictions are being overtaken by the actual speed of acquisition and use of internet access in large sections of the Danish population.

So far, from our Olympian analytical position above the individual focus groups, we have dwelt on the refutation of the 'cultural malaise' thesis. However, we do not conclude that all is well with the media in Denmark.

When we look at the explicit views on media and democracy expressed by the focus groups, we find that especially the long-educated groups are concerned that the tendency of the media to focus on isolated cases and to publicly pillorize the “responsible politicians” may well make politicians unlikely to be visionary and work towards long-term solutions.

There is agreement between long- and short-educated groups that recent TV-journalism is unnecessarily confrontational and often polarizes the issues beyond what is reasonable. The informants do not want journalists to just hold the microphone for politicians who talk endlessly without getting to the point. In such cases journalists should intervene and prevent politicians from evading the issues. On the other hand, there is a unanimous plea for journalists to stop “cutting off” interviewees before they have had a fair chance to present their points of view.

Generally speaking, the informants would like journalists to strive for what we could call a Habermasian ideal of public-sphere dialogue (Habermas, 1962) rather than pursue their own negative and confrontational agendas. The focus group participants often talk from a position which presupposes that a solution actually exists which is “the right one” for a given problem, and that it is the purpose of public, political debate to serve as a vehicle for such a solution. They want to make room for different political perspectives on a specific case, whose voices should be heard, but they do not see these differences as irreconcilable oppositions that would make it impossible to reach a consensus that serves the common good. They believe that “common sense” would often prevail if only journalists did not polarize the different views for the sake of drama.

We may illuminate this view further by borrowing a metaphor from one of the groups in which the participants compared the journalists to boy scouts with the task of keeping the fire of public debate burning lively. Unfortunately, they say, instead of using firewood that creates a steady burning fire they keep throwing petrol on the fire, which therefore burns in an explosive and dangerous manner. In other words, the focus group recommendation is for journalists to stop throwing petrol on the fire of public debate.

Finally a word about the role of public service broadcasting in the Danish democracy: We live in an age when TV channels proliferate and multiple media vie for the attention of consumers and citizens. Media use is increasingly fragmented and individualized. On a background of TV viewing statistics showing that the two Danish public-service channels command a 70 per cent share of the total daily viewing in the country, our focus group conversations provide qualitative documentation of the essential role played by these channels in the provision of democratic prerequisites for the Danish democracy. Particularly the news and current affairs departments of these channels are the guarantee of the continued existence of a common discursive space in which Danish citizens participate in necessary collective discussion about how they want to internally organize the future Danish society and build its external relations with the surrounding international community.

Beyond the discursive – the democratic practices of Danish citizens

In this study we have looked at the way Danish citizens use and experience the news media. On the basis of our findings we have concluded that in spite of the process of 'tabloidization', which has also made its mark in Danish media, it is hard to see the Danish public sphere as being in "a dismal state". At least with respect to that essential part of the democratic process which has to do with citizens keeping informed about what goes on in society, and being knowledgeable and discriminating about mediated meanings, the Danish democracy appears to be quite healthy.

However, these are complex matters and the final verdict must ultimately be based on a wide range of evidence that covers a multitude of other aspects of the democratic social order. We therefore briefly supplement the insights of our own investigation with a recent Danish study of the practices of citizenship based on a different methodology: Jørgen Goul Andersen's survey of the political interests and activities of 1640 respondents, which makes up the Danish part of a Europe-wide study that enables the researchers to make comparative assessment of the eleven different countries involved (Andersen, 2004).

Here we can only bring Andersen's conclusions that summarize his main findings about the political behaviour of Danish citizens compared with citizens in other European countries:

- Denmark has the highest political interest among all the countries studied, and the smallest number of people who are not interested at all in politics.
- Danes come second (after Norway) when it comes to how much people like to discuss politics with others.
- Danes come second (after the Netherlands) when respondents estimate their opportunity to put their views to the politicians and be heard.
- Denmark is one of few countries where the turnout in general elections has not declined in recent years.
- Denmark has the highest proportion of membership in associations, societies and clubs. On average Danes are members of three.
- Danes come third (after Sweden and Norway) in level of political consumerism.
- Danes come third when asked about the opportunity to influence how various public and private institutions are run at the local level: schools, the health system, and the workplace.

Danes have a below-average score on issues like political party membership and participation in demonstrations, and Andersen is concerned about

weakening links between the population and the party political system. Nevertheless, he feels able to conclude on an optimistic note, and to title his book *A Fairly Lively Democracy*.

We see Andersen's results as complementary to and supportive of our own. On this background we invite media and communication scholars in other countries to launch empirical research initiatives to specifically investigate people's sense-making use and experience of the news media. Only by (also) doing empirical fieldwork on the everyday construction of mediated citizenship may we aspire to pronounce valid verdicts on the state of the public sphere.

Note

1. DR1 is the oldest broad-appeal, license fee-based public service TV channel of the Danish Broadcasting Corporation, est. 1954, with an app. 30 percent audience share; DR2 is its upmarket niche channel, est. 1996, with a 4 per cent share; TV2 is the broad-appeal, advertising-based public service newcomer, est. 1988, with an app. 35 per cent share)

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Public Service Broadcasting and Cultural Context

Comparing the United States and European Experience

Robert K. Avery

While there may be some sense of general commonality across American and European approaches to public service broadcasting, there exist basic underlying differences that arise from fundamental distinctions in structure, funding and cultural heritage. These differences can explain the relative long-term acceptance and success of the enterprise across western European countries in contrast to the sustained marginalization and ongoing struggle for survival in the United States. This chapter provides a summary of the historical artifacts and continuing issues that lead European scholars and practitioners to question the significance and relevance of the American experience in the global context.

Differences in principles and practice

At this writing, there is talk in the United States of the Association of Public Television Stations [APTS], the major public broadcasting trade organization, forging an agreement with the cable television industry. The major cable operators would guarantee to carry up to four program channels from the public television stations in their markets when the complete transition to digital is realized. Compared to the single channel carriage presently required, this expansion to multiple channel carriage is seen as a breakthrough in insuring that the multifaceted digital services projected for most public broadcasters will be included in the cable companies' programming menu. At the same time, in the wake of the retirement of mainstay Bill Moyers from the public affairs line-up of the Public Broadcasting Service [PBS], disparate system planners are scrambling to take advantage of the digitally-enhanced opportunities for public affairs programming. With one of the envisioned program streams for cable outlets being a "Public Square" that would provide in-depth discussion on the major issues of the day, critics wonder if public television can attract enough viewers to make the multichannel agreement with the cable industry a long-term deal.

In early 2005, the top-rated public affairs show in primetime, *Now*, could only muster a 1.1 average rating, well below the overall primetime PBS average of 1.7. The fact of the matter is that even if the most highly watched PBS programs doubled their audiences, the resulting totals would fall well below the viewing standards set by European public service broadcasters for their own top flight fare. This fundamental distinction speaks to the deep cultural divide between listeners and viewers in the United States compared with Western Europe.

For the people of most western European countries, the presence of a publicly financed broadcasting service is a familiar feature of everyday life – it has been significant as long as they can remember, quite nearly from the beginning of broadcasting. For people living in the United States, public broadcasting operates on the fringe of consciousness, indeed if they are aware of its existence at all. Understanding why public service broadcasting enjoys prominence in the cultural mainstream of Europe while struggling at the margins of U.S. culture encourages a greater appreciation of the American experience and the actual significance of public broadcasting's modest achievements. The encroachment of commercial broadcasting in Great Britain, Scandinavia, and elsewhere in Europe has generated growing concerns for more than a decade, but in the United States commercialism always has been the way of life.

Born in the USA

There is a plaque on the campus of the University of Wisconsin that proudly proclaims Madison as the birthplace of educational radio in America. Experimental station 9XM was operating as early as 1919, a full year before the historic broadcast of commercial station KDKA in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The University of Wisconsin was just one of a number of colleges and universities with experimental radio stations that were in operation well before private enterprise staked claim to the electromagnetic spectrum. This early start in the educational sector would mean little once commercial entrepreneurs recognized that radio could be exploited as an advertising medium. Private business interests had organized a fledgling trade organization – the National Association of Broadcasters – by 1922. And it was through the NAB that commercial interests began pressing for federal regulations that would enable the new broadcasting business to flourish.

In 1927, the private sector got its wish with the passage of the Radio Act that spoke largely to technical matters, but set forth a specific mandate to operate “in the public interest, convenience and necessity.” Drawing from legislation that had created the Interstate Commerce Commission forty years earlier, Congress determined that U.S. broadcasting policy should be guided by a “public interest” standard that sought to protect the rights of the public while permitting for the growth and expansion of the infant radio industry.

Exactly what this “public interest” standard meant became the source of heated debate that extends to the present day, and has served to frame the research agenda of countless public policy scholars.

By the late 1920s, private businesses were challenging the licenses held by educational institutions in comparative hearings before the Federal Radio Commission. As a result, the 171 stations on the air in 1925 started a steady decline. Willard Rowland (1986, 1993) argues that this was just the beginning of a long progression of regulatory decisions that demonstrate the continuing (and systematic) marginalization and disenfranchisement of educational, and later, public broadcasting in the United States. Unlike most other industrialized democracies that envisioned public service broadcasting as being central to the educational, cultural, and civic discourses of society, U.S. lawmakers believed in the spirit of a progressive and socially responsible free enterprise system where “the business of America is business.” Toward this end, the role of government was to “do little more than protect the fundamental elements of private enterprise” (Rowland, 1986:253).

As the United States entered the Great Depression, the young radio industry that was supported by commercial sponsorship and income from the sale of radio receivers that delivered escapist programming, was among the most resilient sectors of the economy. The business strength of broadcasting brought with it political power, and the general tendency for a lax regulatory environment. By 1933, there was a move to combine the regulatory oversight of the telephone and broadcasting industries, and the result was the Communications Act of 1934, the law that, as amended, continues to this day. The reform efforts of educators, cultural and other civic groups to seize this moment in U.S. history to set aside a fourth of the radio channels for public service uses is the subject of Robert McChesney’s (1993) seminal work, *Telecommunications, Mass Media, and Democracy: The Battle for Broadcasting, 1928-1935*. This is a most definitive – though quite depressing – analysis that concludes by reminding the reader that there were indeed alternatives put before Congress that offered options other than a reconfirmation of the capitalistic domination of American broadcasting.

The work of Rowland and McChesney were extended by Thomas Streeter (1996). Streeter’s revisionist critical history introduces the theoretical perspective of “corporate liberalism” as a way to document and interpret how the highly pervasive and insidious ideology of U. S. capitalism dictates the very fabric of cultural, social, and civic life, rendering it impossible to ascertain the value of any offering in public or private life except from that perspective. All three argue that from the earliest formulation of U.S. public policy, a governing commercial ideology was fundamental to such an extent that it made the inherent contradictions of the American experience seem not only plausible but also logical. In effect, this enabled the electorate to accept a contentious doctrine of corporate centralization and public marginalization. According to Streeter, beginning with the initial Radio Act of 1912, the terms were set by lawmakers as to how tensions would be resolved regarding the use of the airwaves:

These events represented a political accomplishment. They were neither the natural working out of economic forces nor a simple triumph of big organizations over individuals. They reflected the triumph of a particular configuration of business organization, technology, and state action, a configuration characteristic of corporate liberalism: corporate private-sector cooperation with the public sector, small businesses relegated to a secondary role, and grass-roots nonprofit activities pushed to the fringes. (...) What was peculiar about the U.S. context was not the fact of cooperative corporate-government relations but the fact that these relations were made politically acceptable to a liberal polity accustomed to individualism, rights, and free enterprise. (...) Corporate liberal faith in expertise and a functionalist social vision helped make sense of the situation by couching actions as a matter of neutral, technological necessity in service of the social system. (Streeter, 1996:79)

Streeter's revisionist analysis excavates the process by which the interests of corporate America were privileged and made to seem natural to the average citizen/consumer, from the commodification of the electromagnetic spectrum to the bureaucratic simulations of market relations between consumers and corporations, from a reconceptualization of property and ownership to the construction of audience as commodity. More recently, John Armstrong (2002) added credence to Streeter's argument that broadcast policy is essentially an accepted part of the institution of commercial broadcasting by demonstrating how the Federal Communications Commission's [FCC] interpretation of the fundamental principle of "localism" – supposedly tied to the preservation of the "public interest" – exhibited an equally flawed logic and shifting sets of commercial values. But regardless of the scholarly lens one uses to retrace the events of this defining period in U.S. broadcasting history, it's clear that none of the possible alternatives would enable public service broadcasting to gain any centralist position in U.S. communication policy.

Not until 1945 with the authorization of FM broadcasting did the FCC finally respond to the persistent complaints of educators and journalistic critics alike by providing a permanent home for "noncommercial educational" licensees. While the reservation of twenty percent of the FM band was greeted as a breakthrough achievement for the advancement of the public service mission of radio in America, in fact it failed to have the positive impact envisioned by those animating the struggle. Again, the reasons were mainly economic and market-related.

First, private investment in AM radio offered no immediate incentives for the deployment of FM, either in the building of commercial FM stations or the production of FM radio receivers. Second, the designation of these licenses as "noncommercial educational" assured that once these new stations were activated they would be inherently deprived of the very economic support system that Congress had enshrined. And third, the "noncommercial educational" designation made explicit the secondary, marginal and auxil-

itary status that the new broadcast service would occupy within the collective social consciousness, as well as the operative market context.

The arrival of television re-energized the perennial struggle between private and the public sectors. In 1952, when the FCC released its long-awaited Sixth Report and Order that set forth a national table of television channel allocations, a total of 242 (or 12%) of the channels were designated as “noncommercial educational,” with 80 channels in the VHF band (Channels 2-13) and 180 channels in the UHF band (Channels 14-83). Just as commercial broadcasters had no incentives to develop FM in the 1940s, there was no incentive to develop UHF television in the 1950s. The commercial broadcasters had already homesteaded the technically superior VHF channels – the only channels that television sets could receive in those days. So from the very outset of noncommercial educational television, only one-third of the channels authorized had any hope of finding an audience. It was not until the passage of the All Channel Receiver Act in the 1960s that television set manufacturers were forced to include UHF reception capability, and even after all-channel receivers became available the reception itself was usually highly inferior to VHF. Also, the dexterity needed to find the station on the dial required “the fingers of a safe cracker.”

This was the minimalist policy and market environment in which noncommercial educational radio and television struggled in the 1960s as President Lyndon Johnson arrived in the White House and advanced his agenda for the “Great Society.” Recognizing that the moment for staking a claim to the national political stage had at long last arrived, leaders within the educational television [ETV] community mounted a long-range funding conference that culminated in recommendations for the formation of a blue ribbon commission to assess the potential for educational television in the United States.

The Ford Foundation had long taken a keen interest in educational television and had invested many millions of dollars in its survival. Although such a long-standing financial commitment made Ford the natural source of funding for a blue ribbon panel, ETV leaders recognized that a positive report from a Ford-funded commission would be viewed as biased, regardless of the integrity of the evaluation. As a result, the Carnegie Foundation agreed to bankroll the study.

The Carnegie Commission on the Future of Educational Television was formed in 1964, and after an exhaustive study that involved the collection of data from all existing stations, on-site visits to ninety-two stations and to major public service broadcasting systems around the globe, issued its report in 1967. Titled, *Public Television: A Program for Action*, the report represented the first formal statement about educational broadcasting ever sanctioned by a U.S. President. This statement, to become commonly referred to as Carnegie I, was a monumental achievement on a number of fronts.

First, the report provided the first articulation of anything that resembled a public service remit for the fledgling U.S. system. Second, the report legiti-

mized the educational television enterprise (now under the rubric of *public* television), and made twelve recommendations that were actionable, all seeking to strengthen the system financially, structurally, and conceptually. And third, the report – backed by some of the nation’s most respected citizens – offered the kind of highly credible and defensible documentation that would be enticing to even the most skeptical lawmaker. Within the span of a few short months, the report was transformed into legislation, moved through the House and the Senate, and delivered to President Johnson’s desk for his signature. On November 7th, Johnson signed the Public Broadcasting Act that created the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and outlined its mandate to facilitate the development of a national public television and radio system in the United States.

Significance of history

But there are several important historical footnotes that must be added to this landmark event. First, the Carnegie Commission had recommended the authorization of an excise tax on television sets that would generate revenue to be made available to the new Corporation through a Trust Fund. The legislation signed by Johnson made no such provision for guaranteed, politically insulated funding for public broadcasting. Second, the Carnegie Commission recommended that the new nonprofit non-governmental Corporation would be established as a political heat shield. But the Act stated that the new Corporation was to be governed by a board of fifteen presidential appointees, assuring that the political leanings of each successive administration would most certainly influence Corporation decision-making. And third, the language of the Act fell far short of articulating a mission for U.S. public broadcasting.

In a series of abstract statements fitting of Johnson’s Great Society rhetoric, the Act set forth the mandate to “do good.” One representative phrase illustrates the point: “...it furthers the general welfare to encourage public telecommunications services that will be responsive to the interests of the people both in particular localities and throughout the United States, which will constitute an expression of diversity and excellence, and which will constitute a source of alternative telecommunications services for all the citizens of the Nation...” (Subpart D, Section 396.5). Although this phrase reaffirmed that public broadcasting in the United States should be nurtured at both the national and local levels, it made explicit in U.S. communication law that public broadcasting was an “alternative” to the dominant commercial service that the language privileged.

Thus, even this Carnegie Commission report that remains to this day the most supportive U.S. public document ever written on behalf of American public broadcasting falls victim to the familiar ideological trap. In the “Intro-

ductory Note” the Commission wrote that the envisioned public television “...includes all that is of human interest and importance which is not at the moment *appropriate or available for support by advertising...*”[emphasis added] (Carnegie, 1967:frontal). So, after waiting forty years from the formal establishment of commercial broadcasting in the U.S. (the Radio Act of 1927), the American citizenry was offered up a public broadcasting system that was expected to fulfill an undefined public service mission, conceived as subordinate to private enterprise, and deprived of any secure financial support. As a creature of Congressional legislation, the new public broadcasting system would be expected to build a case for continued funding, year after year, arguing before political leaders whose only meaningful point of reference for valuing broadcast programming was size of audience and commercial industry profits.

Persistent issues in U.S. public broadcasting – lessons for abroad

Given this historical frame, it comes as no surprise that public broadcasting in the United States has continually faced a long uphill series of challenges, both internally and externally. As a loosely defined collective of local stations that embody the American value of individual rights, radio and television stations (companies) frequently place their own individuality and independence above the common good of the social system. Only the fear of extinction, the loss of vital resources, or the potential of a missed opportunity, motivate managers to quickly engage in harmonious collective discourse. What most often unites public broadcasters as a common front are recurring political attacks from those government officials that vocally regard public broadcasting as a mouthpiece for a Leftist Elite. Indeed, at this writing the neo-conservative ideology of the Bush administration has public broadcasters huddled together in fear, and perhaps loathing. In January 2005, the Public Broadcasting Service caved to pressures from Bush’s new Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, who claimed that a cartoon bunny (Buster) from the children’s series, *Postcards from Buster*, was promoting gay and lesbian lifestyles. This is a vivid reminder that without insulated funding those who control the purse can control programming, regardless of what audiences might want to see and hear. Overall, however, it is the ideology of American capitalism that has always been at the heart of U.S. communications policy, the litany of “public interest” rhetoric to the contrary. Numerous U.S. scholars (e.g., Hoynes, 1994; Engelman, 1996; McCourt, 1999; McChesney, 1999; Witherspoon, Kovitz, Avery & Stavitsky, 2000), have identified the controlling interests of American corporate ideology as a fundamental distinction between the successes of European public service broadcasting and the well-documented shortcomings (see Tracey, 1998; Balas, 2003)

of the U.S. public broadcasting system. I am suggesting that the fundamental reason is because the American view of capitalism has been systematically built into the structures, policies, and economics of U.S. broadcasting from the outset, and ardently preserved ever after. It's the red thread of American cultural context.

Thus and in contrast to the 1927 Royal Charter that established the British Broadcasting Corporation that was mandated to serve all the people with a broad range of programming and distribution facilities financed by the people served, the 1927 U.S. Radio Act mandated only the licensing of local stations that depended on commercial support and were destined to cultivate audiences with light entertainment programming to maximize the number of listeners. Whereas the citizens of European countries expect their governments to contribute to their cultural experience through the provision of radio and television programming as an integral part of everyday life, most Americans have no such expectation. In the United States, "culture" is not recognized as being central to one's daily existence, and broadcasting itself – as a product of and contributor to the market forces imperative – is not seen by most people as having a role outside the provision of popular program genres. Indeed, Streeter's notion of "corporate liberalism" is so deeply ingrained in the fabric of American life that most U. S. citizens can only imagine the products of mediated culture as being the province of free enterprise, where market forces dictate human perception. America's cultural commons for the average citizen is a consumer culture, a culture that is dominated by commercial brands with all incumbent icons, logos, slogans and jingles. Sadly, most of the citizenry simply cannot think of it any other way.

How could public broadcasters ever convince lawmakers of the virtues of their programming without providing audience numbers that confirm a reasonable number of listeners and viewers receiving the service? Public broadcasters in the U.S. are forced to recognize that their "core audience" is an upscale and comparatively narrow demographic. It is from these listeners and viewers that American public broadcasters are forced to draw the majority of their voluntary contributions, i.e., donations as a tax-deductible charity that now comprise more than a third of local station budgets. So, while public broadcasters might want to focus on programs that satisfy a much wider range of audience interests – a mission akin to the public service remit of European countries – the pragmatic realities argue for what public broadcast consultants refer to as "supersizing the core." The result is non-controversial, mainstream offerings that are looking and sounding more and more like what viewers and listeners can find on commercially supported or subscription channels. These same research consultants are encouraging stations to invest more resources in attractive national programming, despite a proud heritage of "localism."

Despite the hopes of some media reformers, there have been only modest successes in the last few years to suggest any positive change in the deeply established performance patterns of commercial and public broadcasters,

entrusted lawmakers, and viewers and listeners. The original vision of the Carnegie Commission for an insulated public trust fund that would provide guaranteed system funding was given a rebirth by a proposal generated by Lawrence Grossman and Newton Minow (2001) called the "Digital Promise Project." Using the Morrill Land Grant College Act of 1862 as an important precedent – which dedicated the revenue from the sale of public lands to build a national system of higher education – the proposal by Grossman and Minow calls for the receipts generated by the auctioning of the recovered spectrum space resulting from the conversion from analog to digital broadcasting to fund a multibillion-dollar national Digital Opportunity Investment Trust. With current speculation that the conversion for television will be complete by December 2008, it is imperative that public broadcasters get a commitment from lawmakers now. Leading the lobbying charge for a scaled down version of the Grossman-Minow proposal is John Lawson, APTS president, who was pitching the plan in spring 2005 in the belief that the fund could be established at a level of nearly \$100 billion.

While hope springs eternal, there is little to suggest that Las Vegas oddsmakers would bet short odds on the promise of creating the long-imagined insulated funding source. In what appears to be an ever-widening conservative power structure, the idea of a publicly financed broadcasting system with a protected financial pool does not set well at all. Hard-hitting public affairs programs, such as the *Frontline* documentary series that has raised questions about the judgments and practices of the current administration and a Republican-controlled congress, will most certainly be cited as examples of the kinds programs that need to be offset. Even the most diehard advocates of public broadcasting in the U.S. seem to be growing weary of the seemingly fruitless struggle to preserve a public service broadcast ideal within a contemporary culture that has evidently forgotten the tireless efforts and personal sacrifices of an earlier generation of educational broadcasters.

Douglas Cater, a principal player in orchestrating the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, once observed that without a strong public broadcasting system in the United States we were heading toward a "1984" that even George Orwell had not imagined. But that was before the Internet, World Wide Web, and the advent of news blogs. Today, much of the energy for generating "alternative" voices and preserving a participatory democracy seems to be directed elsewhere (whether that notion of democracy is a fiction or not). The only singular national voice is the one that sells products and services. As former public television commentator Bill Moyers has observed, it is the television commercial that is the "communion wafer" of our time. And as the bulk of the programs on U. S. public broadcasting stations look increasingly like those on commercial or subscription niche channels, the overly-familiar rhetoric of system supporters is losing its punch.

These issues that were once seen as characterizing the sad state of U.S. public broadcasting are now being actively addressed by public service broadcasters around the globe, as public funding everywhere is becoming increas-

ingly scarce and the very legitimacy of existing public service remits is being challenged. This was a repeated theme of the RIPE @ 2004 conference in Copenhagen and Aarhus, Denmark. Yet, even there, the long-standing bias of some conference participants tended to relegate the relatively modest funding and audience penetration of the American experience to the category of irrelevant and insignificant, especially when viewed against the backdrop of comparative statistics for European public service broadcasters. While there are some scholars (see Lowe & Stavitsky, 2004) who argue convincingly for mining the history of U.S. broadcasting for important lessons that can facilitate the inevitable transition to a much more competitive marketplace, there is still some reluctance to embrace such cross-fertilization. The deeply rooted differences between the American and European conceptualizations of "private" and "public," and the clear distinctions between marginalization and bare subsistence on the one hand and a healthy centralist existence on the other, makes bridging the philosophical and operational gap problematic. One can only hope that as the global trend toward privatization of public services continues to advance, that the lessons learned on one continent can be readily acknowledged and adapted elsewhere.

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EMERGING STRATEGIC ISSUES FOR PSB

Building the Digital Commons

Public Broadcasting in the Age of the Internet

Graham Murdock

It's hard to realise, now that television has become a commodity, subject to market forces... that there was a time when many of us saw it as a public facility... a place where ideas could be presented in all sorts of ways ... an arena of democratic exchange in the interest of all. (Joan Bakewell, programme presenter. Started work at the BBC in 1954, now retired (2004:182).

It is time to retrieve, or perhaps to reinvent the public domain. (David Marquand, political theorist. Previously Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford (2004:5)

Over the last two decades debates on television have been dominated by a swelling chorus intoning the last rites for public service broadcasting and pressing for a fully commercialised communications environment. They argue that organisations and regulatory systems created in an age of spectrum scarcity have been rendered redundant by the increasing abundance of channels. They label the compulsory licence fee as an unacceptable curb on individual consumer choice and see public broadcasting's monopoly entitlement to public funding as conferring unfair advantages in an increasingly competitive marketplace. Faced with this relentless attack many senior broadcasters have come to share Joan Bakewell's feeling that the game is indeed up. They lament the passing of the ideals to which they devoted their lives and agree reluctantly with Robert James Walker that "The old dreams were good dreams; they didn't work out, but I'm glad I had them" (quoted in Tracey, 1998:pxvii).

I want to argue that this pessimism is misplaced and that Public Service Broadcasting [PSB] is a project whose time has finally come both philosophically and practically. As David Marquand has argued so eloquently, in an age of increasing individualisation and commercialism we need more than ever to reinvent the public domain. Because broadcasting is central to contemporary cultural life, and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future, rethinking public service is the key to this project. Pursuing it requires us to jettison our familiar analogue maps and draw up a new digital chart. We have to stop thinking of public broadcasting as a stand-alone organisation and see

it as the principal node in an emerging network of public and civil initiatives that, taken together, provide the basis for new shared cultural space, a digital commons, that can help forge new communal connections and stand against the continual pressure for enclosure coming from commercial interests on the one hand and the new moral essentialism on the other.

The core rationale for public service broadcasting lies in its commitment to providing the cultural resources required for full citizenship. From the outset however both the key terms in this formulation – ‘citizenship’ and ‘culture’ – have been continually contested. The sources of this struggle lie in the combination of circumstances that shaped broadcasting’s initial emergence as a mass medium and the resilience of the settlements arrived at then.

Re-imagined landscapes

In the years immediately following World War I, broadcasting moved from being a patchwork of mostly small scale initiatives, many of them amateur, to become the domain of full time practitioners centralised in bureaucratic organisations. The age of the hobbyist and radio ham was over. Broadcasting was now a professionalised distribution system delivering a daily schedule of programming to audiences. In planning what to broadcast and how to address their listeners however, broadcasters had to decide how to position themselves in relation to two profound social shifts: the emergence of a mass consumer system and the arrival of mass democracy.

The first Model T motor car rolled off Henry Ford’s new assembly line in 1913, extending the mobile privatisation first introduced by the bicycle. In 1916, we saw the launch of the automatic washing machine and the opening of Clarence Saunders Piggly Wiggly store in Memphis, the first grocery outlet to allow shoppers to browse the shelves themselves rather than have a clerk make up their order. A new imaginative landscape was being assembled in which domestic drudgery would be abolished and personal choice extended. The home would cease to be the focus of continual worry about making ends meet and become an arena of self expression and social display. The labour of maintaining basic living standards would give way to the pleasures of constructing lifestyles.

The task of selling this vision of personal liberation was delegated to the emerging advertising industry. The swelling ranks of copywriters and image engineers were charged with maintaining the mass demand needed to keep the new system of mass production running at full tilt. The more memorably advertising campaigns promoted their clients’ products the more they also helped cement the master ideology of consumerism that underpinned the new economic system. Consumerism sold secular salvation. It promised that the trails and tribulations of everyday life – imperfect bodies, loneliness, failed relationships – could be swept away by the healing touch of com-

modities – skin cream, peppermint toothpaste, shampoo, a fashionable new outfit, a phonograph. No one was excluded. Everyone could be born again. In the mansions of Selfridges and Sears Roebuck there were many rooms. All that was required was an act of individual choice followed by a purchase.

By encouraging people to buy their way out of the social contract, consumerism acted as a powerful solvent of support for collective solutions. Why worry about the condition of public transport if you could drive everywhere? For the majority of Europeans recovering from the devastation of war and many Americans faced with the Great Depression however, the new consumer landscape remained mostly out of reach until after World War II. Consequently, moves to extend socialised improvements to living standards and life chances commanded high levels of popular support. They lay at the heart of the new politics of mass participation.

The years after 1918 saw women win the right to vote in a number of major European countries that had previously resisted change, though progress was uneven and bitterly contested to the end. In Britain full adult suffrage was finally introduced in 1928, making it plausible to talk of a genuine mass democracy for the first time. As well as being consumers, making personal choices in the marketplace, people were now citizens with the right to a say in the construction of collective life and the laws and rules that governed it. Thin conceptions of active citizenship identified it primarily with voting in local and national elections. Thicker conceptions saw it as the right to participate fully in every area of communal life and help shape the forms they might take in the future. This extended conception embraced not only the self organised creativity of local choirs and spontaneous discussions of contemporary issues in pubs and clubs, but also street demonstrations against corporate malpractice and government failure. For adherents of thin conceptions, mass mobilisation smacked of crowd behaviour and conjured up discomforting images of mobs running riot. They identified ‘good citizens’ as sovereign individuals diligently informing themselves about current affairs, rationally evaluating the competing policy packages put forward by the major political parties, and soberly registering their preference in the secrecy of the ballot box. But both sides recognised that active citizenship required a range of resources that supported participation on a basis of equity and dignity.

Some of these were clearly material – a life long income, decent housing, access to healthcare, safe public space, a working public transport system, reasonable holidays and free time. Securing these basic supports for participation was the cornerstone of struggles to extend the state’s responsibilities for welfare. But equally clearly other key resources for citizenship were cultural.

Cultural entitlements

Substantive citizenship depends crucially on access rights to four key clusters of cultural resources: information, knowledge, deliberation, representation, and participation.

Information Rights. Firstly, citizens are entitled to comprehensive and disinterested information about current events and conditions and about the actions, motivations and plans of all those institutions – both governmental and corporate – with significant power over their life chances and living conditions

Knowledge Rights. Secondly, they require access to the full range of interpretive frameworks that convert raw information into explanations, identify causes, highlight unnoticed links and connections, clarify how particular events and decisions will impact on every lives and choices, and lay out the full range of options for intervention and change.

Deliberative Rights. Thirdly, since in complex societies there are always multiple interpretations and proposals in play, active citizenship also requires access to deliberative fora where contending positions can be tested against the available evidence, their ethical presuppositions questioned, and their likely consequences for the quality of public life rigorously evaluated. Before moving to the third and fourth entitlements, some discussion is merited about deliberative rights.

As the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas has argued so forcefully, principled deliberation is the defining feature of modern democracy and the main business of all those social spaces where “issues connected with the practice of the state” are discussed, a collective arena he dubs, “the political public sphere” (Habermas, 1989:231). Running alongside this ‘political public sphere’ he identifies a parallel collective space, the ‘literary public sphere’, centred on popular fiction, where readers develop self knowledge and empathy by imagining themselves in other people’s shoes. He sees this as entirely separate from the political public sphere however and therefore marginal to the making of citizenship. Interestingly, this dualism has been strongly echoed in market-oriented policy documents on broadcasting. The influential British report on broadcast finance issued by a committee chaired by the neo-liberal economist, Professor Alan Peacock, is typical. Having recommended that all BBC services should be sold on subscription, they admitted that in a competitive multi-channel market some ‘types of programmes’ that contribute essential resources for citizenship “are unlikely to be commercially self-supporting in the view of broadcasting entrepreneurs” and will therefore continue to require public subsidy (Home Office, 1986:133). Their list, which is headed by news, current affairs and documentaries, includes “critical and controversial programmes, covering everything from the appraisal of commercial products to politics, ideology, philosophy and religion” (op cit: 127).

Two things follow from this division of broadcast labour. Firstly, it is no longer the business of commercial broadcasters to provide the full range of information, knowledge and deliberation. Secondly, public service broadcasting should focus on these areas and not compete with commercial operators in the provision of popular fiction, comedy or entertainment. Not surprisingly, both arguments have been strongly promoted by commercial channels wishing to jettison their public service obligations and reduce the competitive reach of public service organisations.

This position, whilst superficially plausible, is based on a false assumption. It presupposes that citizens already know their own intentions, desires and preferences and simply require access to information and interpretive frameworks in order to barter with others effectively. However, as Noelle McAfee points out in her critique of Habermas, if citizens have already adopted fully formed positions why bother to engage in deliberation as opposed to debate? Debate involves defending a position against questioning and attack, but deliberation “means being willing to release one’s own view and adopt another” (McAfee, 2000:190). To make the imaginative leap this requires and deal fairly and justly with other people’s claims we first need to ask “What is it like to be someone else, to be particular kinds of other people? How does it come about that these people can be like that?” (Mepham, 1990:60). Because fiction, drama, and comedy offer greater flexibility in exploring these questions, they remain absolutely central to public service broadcasting’s core rationale. Their value in securing the imaginative resources required for full citizenship however depends on their openness to diversity and provisionality, which brings us to the thorny issue of representation in both senses the term carries in English; as an array of cultural forms and genres and a system of social delegation.

Representation Rights. If we accept that the right to have one’s experiences, beliefs and aspirations depicted in their full complexity and in ways that encourage empathy and insight rather than rejection and contempt is a basic cultural entitlement of citizenship, we need to ask: ‘Whose lives and opinions are represented in the major arenas of public culture and who is excluded or marginalized? How do particular cultural forms organise ways of talking about and looking at events and situations? Do they privilege certain viewpoints and marginalize others? Do they employ familiar stereotypes or deconstruct them?’ But we also need to ask questions about the social organisation of cultural expression, about who is entitled to speak for or about others, about what responsibilities they owe to the people whose views and hopes they claim to articulate, and about the rights of reply and redress open to those who feel misrepresented.

Participation Rights. These questions in turn raise issues of participation. For reasons I will explore presently, public service broadcasting has traditionally constructed its audiences primarily as listeners rather than speakers or performers, spectators rather than image-makers. Over the last two decades, however, this sense of exclusion has generated increasing demands

from viewers and listeners for more participation in the making of screened culture and the organisation of public debate.

Recent struggles over representation and participation are rooted in long standing tensions in public broadcasting's organisation and sense of its social mission. The key question in the context of the present argument is whether these contradictions can now be overcome.

Contradictory projects

During the century long struggle for the universal franchise a series of publicly funded cultural initiatives were launched offering facilities that were either free or heavily subsidised. They included adult education courses, public libraries, galleries, concerts and museums. One of their major aims was to encourage responsible citizenship. Public service broadcasting extended and generalised this project, but it was shot through from the outset by contradictions around its core conceptions of professionalism, education, and nation building.

Professionalism

As with all public institutions, public broadcasting was seen as the specialised domain of a new class of professionals motivated by "pride in a job well done or a sense of civic duty" rather than the search for profits (Marquand, 2004:1-2), and claiming the autonomy to exercise their professional judgments as they saw fit. This insistence on keeping the state at arm's length provided a valuable bulwark against government attempts to commandeer the airwaves in the service of national security and led to continuing skirmishing over the ways radical dissent, civil unrest and external conflicts were reported and explained. At the same time it excluded sustained contributions from vernacular sources on the grounds that they were amateurish and failed to meet professional standards. When ordinary people spoke they did so under conditions determined by the programme makers, as vox pops, applauding audiences, game show contestants, or illustrations of social problems. This asymmetric relation was written into the very fabric of the institution. When the BBC moved to its new headquarters in Broadcasting House at the top of Regent Street, it commissioned a sculpture from the controversial artist, Eric Gill, to place over the main door. The piece showed Prospero and Ariel from Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*. Programme planners and makers were to be the magicians of the new medium, filling the isle with noises of their own invention, ably assisted by the expertise of the technical and support staff.

Education

The careful channelling of expression from below was reinforced by public broadcasting's avowedly educational project which set out to make the 'best that had been thought and said' as widely available as possible. On the one hand this was a liberating intervention. By abolishing the constraints imposed by locality and making Mozart's music, Shakespeare's plays and Einstein's ideas readily available and accessible, it expanded the imaginative horizons of countless listeners and viewers. Dennis Potter, the celebrated television dramatist, was one of them. The son of a coal miner, living in a pit village in an isolated rural area, he vividly remembers the imaginative liberation delivered by radio:

I would not dispute for one wayward whistle or crackle that the BBC of my childhood was paternalistic and often stuffily pompous. It saw itself in an almost priestly role. But at a crucial period of my life it threw open the 'magic case-ment' on great sources of mind-scape at a time when books were hard to come by, and when I had never stepped into a theatre or a concert hall, and would have been scared to do so even if given a chance. (Potter, 1994 :45)

On the other hand, by spelling culture with a capital 'C' and identifying it with the work of artists and experts who had passed into the official canon, this mission to educate reinforced the devaluation of vernacular creativity and lay knowledge. It too often spoke down to its audiences in accents familiar from the pulpit and the classroom. This hierarchy of judgement was institutionalised in mixed programming strategies. By serialising a Dickens novel directly after a variety show, audiences were encouraged to climb the great ladder of culture, to move from darkness to enlightenment. Within this general project national cultural and, by extension Western European culture, was assigned a privileged position.

Nation building

Following the Bolshevik's seizure of power in Russia and the failure of allied intervention in support of the counter revolution, European governments were haunted by the spectre of popular insurrection, a fear made tangible by widespread labour unrest and regional discontent. In response they set out to displace sectional loyalties and establish the nation as the primary source of social identity. As the sole national broadcaster, the BBC played a particularly active role in this symbolic nationalisation, inventing or revivifying a series of shared rituals of solidarity and celebration – the monarch's Christmas Day address, the jingoism on the last night of the Promenade Concerts, broadcasting the chimes of Big Ben at Westminster, relaying the football Cup Final and the annual Oxford and Cambridge boat race on the Thames. But there was another motivation behind this promotion of national culture.

With its cultural industries undamaged by war and increasingly integrated into the emerging mass marketing system the 1920s saw the United States emerge as the dominant global force in popular entertainment, aggressively promoting the pleasures and comforts of consumption. Faced with the relentless rise of Hollywood and the world wide success of jazz and American popular music, a complex which an internal BBC inquiry presented as an octopus extending its tentacles into every corner of popular leisure, public broadcasters had an added incentive to promote national cultural production that spoke to specifically national conditions and issues. As one of the main campaign slogans for public television in Canada put it, the choice was between 'the state or the United States'.

Since public broadcasting was supported out of compulsory taxation and American material was popular it could not be ignored altogether, but its presence could be strictly controlled through quotas, and its limitation signalled by placing and presentation. As Christopher Stone, an early BBC expert on dance music explained, although he felt obliged to include at least one "effort from America" in his weekly show, he was careful to introduce a "faint scoff in my voice when I introduce them" (quoted in Camporesi 2000:126-7).

This emphasis on the centrality of national expression had the positive effect of assigning significant resources to national production and opening up communicative spaces for contending visions of shifting national conditions and structures of feeling. At the same time, particularly in Britain, it also reinforced an island mentality and confirmed a sense of national exceptionalism. Consequently, when the rest of the world was considered it was seen either through the prism of empire or the dualism of democracy's contest with communism.

In common with all institutional formations then, the original British conception of public service broadcasting, which has served as a major reference point around the world, was simultaneously both facilitating and constraining, carefully managed and vigorously contested.

Contested representations

Struggles to open public service broadcasting to a wider range of viewpoints, voices and creative visions increasingly came to centre on issues of representation and participation. From the mid-1960s onwards, a succession of social constituencies who felt themselves to be marginalized or misrepresented by mainstream programming pressed for greater access and the right to speak for themselves. They included women's groups, gay groups, ethnic and linguistic minorities, and increasing numbers of citizens who belonged to no social movement but were tired of being taken for granted, typified, and talked down to.

Public broadcasters responded by developing a range of new programme forms based around lay comment and everyday lives. They addressed contemporary issues through participatory talk shows and citizens juries. They produced documentaries that did away with directive voice-of god commentaries and used unobtrusive filming to get as close as possible to the grounded textures of life and talk in families, workplaces and institutions. And they handed cameras over to audience members so they could film their own lives and present their own preoccupations in ways determined by them, drawing on the professionals for advice but retaining editorial control. At a structural level demands for representation and participation generated new channels, notably Channel 4 in Britain and SBS in Australia, expressly designed to supplement existing provision by catering to constituencies that mainstream public service channels had neglected. This movement to extend rights of representation and participation however coincided with mounting pressure from commercial interests to extend the reach of private broadcasting.

Marketisation

The marketisation of the broadcasting system has been mainly secured by two major policy interventions: liberalisation and the reorientation of regulation.

Liberalisation has introduced competition into broadcast markets that were previously either public monopolies (as in most western European countries) or duopolies with strong public service regulation, as in Britain. In 1980 only two European countries, Italy and the United Kingdom, had dual systems with public service and commercial channels in competition, although YLE Finland leased transmitter time to a domestic commercial TV company (since 1957). The rest remained public monopolies, except for Luxembourg which had always operated a purely private system. By 1997 only Austria, Ireland and Switzerland still had public monopolies and all three were actively preparing for the arrival of commercial channels. As well as massively enlarging their sphere of action, private television interests also succeeded in winning more space for manoeuvre by pressing for the rules governing ownership and advertising to be relaxed and getting the underlying purpose of regulation redefined. As the European Commission's Director General for Competition recently explained, "the emphasis has shifted away from protection of some broadly defined 'public interest'...towards opening up markets, ensuring free and fair competition and promoting the interests of consumers" (Lowe, 2004:1). In this formulation the requirements of full citizenship, though ritually evoked, trail some way behind.

In an increasingly competitive environment, commercial players argue ever more vocally that they cannot be expected to bear the losses involved in

continuing to provide public service programming and that this task should be the sole responsibility of publicly funded organisations. The consequences of allowing commercial operators more scope to pursue profitability are already evident in the shift in documentary and current affairs programming. Talk shows that address audiences as citizens with collective responsibility for shared problems have given way to shows that hail them as individuals confronting personal difficulties (Meijer, 2001). Programmes dealing with difficult, controversial, and complex issues have been replaced by 'reality' shows that decouple structural changes from their individual consequences and present social conflict as entertainment. And like a water cannon at a street demonstration, political questions are swept aside and schedules are drenched in a continuous stream of programmes exhorting viewers to remake their houses, gardens, food, bodies and relations by changing their consumption habits. Against this background the future of public service broadcasting is now more important than ever.

Digital interventions

In considering this future we need to start by acknowledging that public broadcasters will have to move from analogue to digital technologies since governments are intent on assigning more spectrum space to other purposes. Some have already fixed a date for 'switching-off' analogue channels. This transition has the potential to alter broadcasting's relations with its operating environment and its audiences in fundamental ways. Some of these possibilities are already in play. A number of public broadcasters have taken advantage of the extra capacity released by digital compression to launch new digital channels catering to specific constituencies. These may offer more scope for productions aimed at special interests, more space for current affairs, documentary and arts programming, or new contexts where innovative and risky programming ideas can be tried out. The BBC's new service for pre-school children, CBeebies, and its BBC 3 and 4 channels, are cases in point.

Public broadcasters have also been actively experimenting with the interactive capacities of digital technologies. The BBC for example has recently invited viewers to select the Olympic events they wish to watch, register how they want the plot of a radio play to develop, follow up news stories by pulling down additional information from on screen menus, and take part in on screen activities linked to particular programmes after transmission has ended. These innovations are still in the early stages of development but it is already clear that they extend public broadcasting's scope. However, they do not alter the fundamental power relations between broadcasters and their audiences. It remains essentially a top-down system. Viewers are still responding to options orchestrated by programme makers. They may have an in-

creasingly flexible menu to choose from but they are still not allowed in the kitchen. The Internet, and more particularly the World Wide Web, holds the prospect of addressing public broadcasting's historic limitations in more fundamental ways.

Since the explosive growth of the Net has tempted otherwise cautious observers to talk in utopian terms it is important to note that it presents problems as well as possibilities. Three current limitations are particularly important for my argument here.

Firstly, access to the Internet through personal computers remains highly stratified by income, age and education, with substantial numbers of poorer households, elderly people and educational drop-outs facing the prospect of permanent exclusion. Even if they achieve basic connectivity the always on /always high speed broadband and wire-less links needed to access the full range of emerging Internet facilities will remain out of their reach.

Secondly, the Internet's progressive slicing of interests into ever thinner, more specialised, segments mirrors the increasing individualisation of television viewing produced by the explosion of niche cable and satellite channels and the arrival of personal video recorders. Taken together these technologies make it entirely possible to only watch what one already enjoys and to only encounter opinions one already agrees with. In a situation where world views are increasingly polarised and talking across differences on a basis of knowledge and respect is more vital than ever to a working deliberative system, this hollowing out of collective space presents a major challenge to democratic culture.

Thirdly, as with every other branch of the cultural industries, the Internet has become a major arena of corporate activity. The increasing individualisation of consumption over the last decade has been accompanied by an unprecedented consolidation of media ownership producing global multimedia corporations intent on redeveloping cyberspace as retail real estate.

That is the bad news. The good news is that there are two powerful counter tendencies to this process of commodification, one based on a revived philosophy of public goods the other grounded in a moral economy of gift giving governed by norms of reciprocity.

Commerce versus the creative commons

Off-air broadcasting has always been classified as a public good in the lexicon of economics, since unlike a commodity such as a cinema seat, access is potentially universal and everyone can enjoy it at the same time without interfering with anyone else. As we have seen however, from the outset public broadcasting was also thought of as a 'public good' in a more general, philosophical sense, as an activity that aimed to contribute to the quality of communal life and the development of democratic culture. Although other pub-

licly funded institutions shared this ideal, the limits imposed on them by space and location prevented them from matching broadcasting's universality. By abolishing these physical constraints, the Internet allows such public cultural institutions to become public goods in the full sense for the first time.

Many have been quick to take advantage. An ever increasing number of major public libraries, archives, museums and galleries are digitalising their collections and looking for ways to universalise access. In December 2004, five of the world's top libraries, including the Bodleian, the New York Public library, and the libraries of Harvard, Stanford and Michigan Universities, signed a deal with the leading internet search engine, Google, to make their digitalised holdings more easily available over the World Wide Web. Where cultural materials are publicly owned or gifted to the public, these sort of moves present few legal problems. Public universities on the other hand immediately run into difficulties since traditionally lectures and staff publications have been considered as intellectual property owned either by the lecturers or researchers who produced them or, in some revised formulations, by the institution that provided the paid time and facilities that made the work possible. Increasingly, however, university academics are coming to embrace the counter philosophy of the Creative Commons developed by the American law professor, Lawrence Lessig.

This represents the main counter to the growing commercialisation of cultural production. The current struggle between these opposed principles is being waged on two main fronts. Firstly, in the era of marketisation, public cultural institutions are being continually pushed by governments to capitalise on the full value of their assets and holdings by selling their services more assertively. Many university managements have seen 'distance learning' schemes, which sell the intellectual content of courses to students without the expense of having to provide on-site resources, as a major potential money-spinner. In contrast, the faculty of MIT have recently agreed to post all their lectures on the Net for anyone to read and use but not to re-sell. The argument is that since the public have paid for the resources and infrastructure that has enabled academics to work out their tax dollars productively they have a right to access the results without incurring a further fee. But programme makers are not in the same position as academics with a secure salary. Many work freelance or as 'independents' and the royalties paid on their work constitute a major source of income. Moreover, the potential value of their creative work is increasing since original production has signally failed to keep pace with the recent proliferation of distribution channels. As a result, past work is more likely to be recycled and re-shown. To protect the commercial value of these archives and libraries the reach of copyright has been massively extended.

In the United States "from 1790 to 1978, the average copyright terms was never more than thirty-two years, meaning that most culture just a generation and a half old was free for anyone to build upon" (Lessig, 2004:24-5). The average term of copyright is now ninety-five years. It has also expanded

in scope and now gives the copyright owner control not only over his or her work but over any production based in a significant way on the initial creative work. Lessig's counter proposal for a Creative Commons is designed to retain reasonable copyright protection for creative works whilst allowing a range of secondary uses. It is up to creators to nominate the uses they will permit. These might include educational uses, non-commercial uses, sampling, uses within low income nations, or any use providing attribution is given (see Lessig, 2004:283)

The open net

The extension of the philosophy of public goods promoted by the idea of the Creative Commons has been accompanied by an upsurge of intellectual and creative production on the Internet based on horizontal networks of peer-to-peer exchange regulated by an ethic of reciprocity. I post something that I think might interest or benefit you. I do not ask for any payment but I do expect that you, in turn, will post material that might be useful to me. It is a variant of the moral economy of the gift adapted for virtual transactions. One of the best examples of this unwritten social contract in action is *Wikipedia*, the largest encyclopaedia in world history and compiled *entirely* from voluntary contributions. This system of collaborative exchange is also producing novel forms of news and commentary. *OhMyNews* in South Korea currently has 15,000 'citizen reporters' filing stories, observations and opinions. "The result is a rich mix of views and sources-some contradictory, some with unexpected connections or insights-regarding any particular issue" (Uricchio, 2004:153).

The implications have not been lost on journalists. As the editor of the online edition of *The Guardian*, one of Britain's most respected dailies, recently noted; "The tectonic plates of journalism are moving. There is awesome potential in the internet as a gatherer, distributor and checker of news" (Keegan, 2004:25). The explosion of 'blogs' (web logs or online journals) on the Net has opened up multiple spaces for both expert commentary and experiential testimony. Professionally crafted news stories are increasingly subjected to informed scrutiny and counter accounts in full public view. CBS claims that documents show that George Bush received special treatment whilst serving with the Texas Air National Guard. The 'boggling community' expose the documents as frauds. The 'Baghdad Blogger' reporting from the city at the height of the US air offensive in Iraq files eyewitness accounts that consistently cast doubt on the veracity of official briefings.

On screen and on line

Broadcasters too have moved on-line and developed a web presence. Many sites established by commercial stations are confined to breaking news, programming listings, promotional sites for particular shows, electronic stores selling merchandise spun off from programmes, and message boards where viewers can post comments. Their aim is to cement customer loyalty by incorporating audiences more fully into the channel's imagined community. In an increasingly competitive market this makes sound business sense. Public broadcasters have to compete for audiences too, but they have to do more and some are already very active in exploring the possibilities.

The BBC's public web site is currently one of the most trusted and widely used Internet sites in Europe. In October 2004, for example, its news website attracted almost twice as many discrete users as its two nearest rivals, the commercial web portals AOL and Yahoo – 3.5 millions as against 1.5 and 1.4 million (Gibson, 2004:13). It has achieved this position by exploring ways the Internet can extend public broadcasting's core mission of providing cultural resources for thick citizenship. Responses to the devastating tsunami in the India Ocean offer an instructive example. The Corporation was well placed to provide an authoritative guide to the science of the disaster and the politics of the regions and countries struck, but in the absence of film crews and journalists most of the first-hand accounts and images detailing the event came either from local people or tourists. Only a small selection of the resulting amateur video footage, camera phone pictures, and holiday snaps found their way into news bulletins. Much more was posted on the Corporation's web site which rapidly became the key public space for personal testimony, appeals for sightings of missing friends and loved ones, and information on what humanitarian relief was needed and how to donate or contribute.

Information and knowledge rights have been extended by supporting current affairs and documentary programmes with extensive Internet resources. Anyone interested in the issues raised or wanting to know more can now go to the Corporation's site and find a range of additional material and links to other relevant sources and organisations.

Deliberative rights have been extended by setting up a wide range of message boards where viewers and listeners can discuss recent programmes and current issues. Many of these include expert and lay opinion in the same discursive space. During Britain's national debate on genetically modified crops, for example, the BBC dedicated its science bulletin board to discussion of the topic.

Rights of participation have been extended by moving programmes dropped from the on-air schedules to the Web. The BBC's *Video Nation* project, which invites viewers to make short video presentations on an aspect of their lives or opinions, is a good example. Making it available on line has the added advantage of extending the contributions' active life since they are now stored in an electronic archive that can be accessed at any time.

Plans for a much more ambitious system of electronic archiving and retrieval are now emerging as one of the cornerstones of the BBC's strategy for the future. It is already possible to access and play a wide range of radio and television programmes broadcast during the last week. But the recently announced Creative Archive project goes much further. Drawing on the copyright model developed by Creative Commons licensing it aims to put the Corporation's entire programme archive on line and make it available for non commercial uses. This is arguably the most important innovation in public service provision since its original foundation. By allowing viewers not only to watch programmes again but to re-edit them or incorporate segments into their own productions it offers a massive stimulus to self directed learning and vernacular creativity.

This intervention accelerates a shift in public broadcasting's working model of culture that has been gathering momentum for some time as increasing demands for greater participation have battered away at the doors of commissioning editors and channel heads. The result has been a move away from the privileged emphasis on a 'culture in common' whose values and priorities are framed by designated experts and artists towards a greater recognition of the democratic value of a common culture "which is continuously remade and redefined by the collective practice of its members", both expert and lay (Eagleton, 2000:119).

Taken together, these developments point to a major redefinition of public broadcasting's role. It will remain a key centre for original production but programmes will cease to be discrete events to become potential starting points for a variety of activities and involvements. In future the range and organisation of the on line resources public broadcasters provide will be as important as the quality and diversity of its programming in evaluating its contribution to cultural citizenship.

The digital commons

Developing these resources requires us to abandon our old analogue maps of the cultural industries which depicted a series of stand-alone institutions separated by incompatible technologies. We must compile a digital chart showing public broadcasting as the central node in a new network of public and civil institutions that together make up the digital commons, a linked space defined by its shared refusal of commercial enclosure and its commitment to free and universal access, reciprocity, and collaborative activity. This space is potentially global in scope. By linking national institutions and local initiatives across borders it makes the resources of the best resourced equally available to the hardest pressed. As the institution best placed to address the current problems with the Internet outlined earlier, public broadcasting has a pivotal role to play in building this digital commons.

Current patterns of exclusion from the Internet are produced not only by the costs of personal computing and connectivity but by users' feelings of incompetence and symbolic exclusion, and by the perceived irrelevance of what is currently on offer (see Murdock and Golding, 2004). This feeling is particularly prevalent among the elderly who cannot see themselves in the constant stream of advertisements for personal computers peopled by families with children, the affluent young, and entrepreneurs on the move. Because television is an ubiquitous, familiar, and well used presence in everyday life, it is less likely to bump up against these symbolic barriers to participation. Integrating Internet capacity into television sets also provides a way of addressing the accelerating transfer of media time from broadcasting to the Internet among young people aged 15-24 (Day, 2004:13).

Public broadcasting also has the capacity to counter fragmentation. Employing programmes, whether watched in real-time or retrieved on line, to kick-start web based activities maintains at least a minimal base of shared experience. In addition, web surfing has the capacity to counter the self enclosure of zapping and personalised video recorders. Although in the new commercialised television environment mixed programming has given way to building distinctive channel identities, a user entering the public broadcaster's web site to pursue a particular interest will encounter a wide range of links and other possibilities, some of which they may be tempted to follow up.

Finally public broadcasters have the opportunity to capitalise on the high levels of public trust they enjoy to become the portals of choice for anyone wanting not to be sold to and to know that the links listed are to organisations and movements that subscribe to the core principles underpinning the digital commons.

At the same time, the project of reconstructing public service broadcasting as the pivot of the digital commons faces formidable obstacles. Firstly, it entails substantial additional costs to broadcasters and, at least initially, to viewers. Secondly, moving the modal point of entry to the Internet from personal computers to digital television sets also cuts across the ambitions of Bill Gates and other leading computer and telecommunications corporations who see streamed audio and video services as central to their future profitability. Thirdly, it is confronted with governments that are increasingly attentive to commercial lobbying that presents a broadly based digital commons as encroaching unfairly on their future profitability. While accepting the case for renewing the licence fee for another ten years for example, the recent British Government Green paper detailing the BBC's future role insist that ideas for a Creative Archive must be subjected to a full "market impact assessment....before any decision is taken to approve it" (*Department for Media, Culture and Sport*, 2005:para 8.4). Similarly, plans to distribute BBC content over a range of digital devices (including mobile phones) will undergo stringent tests "to weigh their potential value to users against any risk that the BBC might prevent other companies from exploiting the new op-

portunities that technology offers” (op cit: para 8.45). Historically, the struggle to defend the commons was first and last a battle against commercial enclosure (see Murdock, 2001). In the topsy-turvy rhetoric of marketisation, efforts to extend the cultural commons are now recast as a new enclosure movement.

But the stakes are too high not to fight these battles and win. In a world increasingly divided by ethnic, national and religious fundamentalism promoting uncrossable lines between ‘them’ and ‘us’, the righteous and the ungodly, residents and migrants, and united only by consumerism and the superficial and disposable communalities of shared style, fostering a sense of citizenship that is cosmopolitan, values diversity and is committed to addressing problems through deliberation rather than force, is more vital than ever. This is an enormous task but also an unrivalled opportunity.

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Balancing Culture and Commerce on the Global Stage

BBC Worldwide

Jeanette Steemers

With a lengthy public service tradition, Britain has long laboured under the conceit that it produces the “best television in the world”, based on a “clever mix of the public and private” (Graham & Davies, 1997:9). Yet technological advances, the relaxation of regulatory controls, and the consolidation of ownership across borders and media sectors have strengthened commercial approaches to television, at the expense of public service television. Commercial channels demand different programming compared with the broad range of content traditionally associated with public channels guided by public service principles in the ‘public interest’. Programming that maximises revenues from advertising, sponsorship and subscriptions is most in demand, and the ratings success of mainstream channels (including many public channels) requires popular fiction and entertainment rather than the diverse mix of programming associated with the public service-inspired mixed system traditionally favoured by Britain.¹

Despite these profound changes, Britain and the BBC in particular, remain significant exporters of television programmes. In 1996/97 Britain was estimated to account for a 9 per cent share of global trade by volume, three times the share of its nearest rivals (Australia and France)², although trailing by far the 68 per cent US share (DCMS, 1999a: 33). In this context the BBC is rather exceptional. As Europe’s largest exporter of programming, it also accounted for 54 per cent of all British television programme export revenues in 2002 (BBC Worldwide, 2003a).

Britain’s second place position after the US is in part attributable to its membership in the English-language “geolinguistic region” (see Sinclair, Jacka & Cunningham, 1996). This has given British exporters including the BBC preferential access to the US, the largest and richest television market, based on the historical commonalities of language and culture and the anglophile sympathies of some in the US broadcasting community (see Collins, 1989). British programmes account for a tiny proportion of US transmissions, but as Britain’s largest export market it accounted for 43 per cent (\$399 million) of total British export revenues of \$921 million in 2003 (BTDA, 2004). Other

wealthy English-speaking countries (Canada, New Zealand, and Australia) that share cultural and historical ties and a public service tradition, combined with America, accounted for almost 55 per cent of sales in 2003.

Although approaching \$1 billion of sales abroad in 2003, the vast majority of British-produced programmes including BBC documentaries, 'soaps' (*Eastenders*) and hospital drama (*Casualty*) rooted in British social, political and cultural issues have less international appeal. Some estimate that only 10-25 per cent of programming currently produced in Britain has any export potential (David Graham & Associates, 2000: 40; Marlow, 2003: 23). Examples of the BBC's best-selling programmes include factual entertainment (*Walking with Dinosaurs*), natural history (*The Natural World*), children's programming (*Tweenies*), crime thrillers (*Silent Witness*, *Spooks*) and entertainment formats (*Top of the Pops*, *The Weakest Link*).³ Moreover, the impact of British programming in growing markets like the Far East, which accounted for less than 7 per cent of UK export revenues in 2003 (\$62 million), is marginal because of a preference for local programming and a lack of cultural and linguistic proximity (Steemers, 2004).

Nevertheless since 1997 government policy under Labour has consistently identified the creative industries, including television, as a platform for Britain to engage competitively with global audiences "as a showcase for Britishness and British life" (Tambini, 2000:8). As Britain's only global media brand, "the second most famous in the world after that of Coca-Cola" (Herman & McChesney, 1997:46), and as the largest producer of television programming in Britain, the BBC has had an important role in this strategy of global dissemination. However, there is a tension between its position as a national champion for British cultural exports in a predominantly commercial international marketplace and its public service obligations to the domestic market. Moreover, some believe that its commercial strategies overseas are not only at odds with a culturally specific public service ethos, but are also hindering global opportunities and growth for players in the independent production sector (see PACT, 2004).

What are the drawbacks and benefits of such engagement, and should public service broadcasters, like their commercial rivals, look beyond national boundaries to engage with a broader international public? Addressing the question, this chapter starts by investigating the policy background behind the BBC's global presence in television before looking in more detail at its commercial strategies in respect of programme exports, international channels and collaboration with commercial partners overseas. Within the broader context of globalisation and the transformation of world television markets, it then sets out to chart the extent and changing nature of the BBC's international presence in different markets, drawing on industry updates and interviews with programme buyers.⁴ It is argued that the BBC's international presence has undergone a shift from being primarily a purveyor of British programming for institutionally and culturally proximate public service institutions, to that of being a supplier of more universally appealing content

whose public service and British origins are masked in an interplay of the global and the local. It concludes with consideration of the broader implications of international engagement and the extent to which international priorities are shaping the BBC's strategies and output.

Policy background

In 1992 the BBC identified "the communication of cultures and ideas between Britain and abroad" as a key PSB role that complemented commercial provision (BBC, 1992: 19). But Government policy has also been a key driver behind the BBC's global strategies. In 1994 the Conservative government called on the Corporation to adopt a more commercial approach and evolve "into an international multi-media enterprise, building on its present commercial services for audiences in this country and overseas" (DNH, 1994: 1). This exhortation to greater involvement in commercial activities was based on three objectives linked to the UK's international competitiveness, namely:

- Contributing to broadcasting exports in an expanding global market
- "Bringing a distinctively United Kingdom voice, outlook and culture into the world market, with an emphasis on accurate and impartial news and high quality programmes"
- Generating income for programme-making to supplement licence fee revenues (Ibid.: 24).

The Corporation had always been involved in commercial activities on a small scale, but the 1996 Royal Charter underpinning the existence and obligations of the BBC endorsed commercial activities as core objectives of the BBC, giving it a public duty to commercially exploit its assets (DNH, 1996). This was the price demanded by the Conservative government for maintaining the status quo on the licence fee as the principle source of funding and for sanctioning new licence-fee funded digital services. The BBC has never been allowed to transmit commercial advertising or sponsored programmes on its publicly funded channels because this would upset the funding balance between privately and publicly-owned television.⁵ That hasn't changed. Exploitation of secondary rights (programme sales to other channels at home and overseas) and tertiary rights (consumer products, video/DVD, publishing) therefore constitutes the bulk of its commercial income.

From 1997 the drive to make the Corporation pursue market opportunities continued under the Labour government. The government agreed a licence fee increase in February 2000 of £200 million per year, but contingent on £1.1billion in savings by 2006-7 from increased efficiency and commercial activities, including partnerships and joint ventures (Smith, 2000). This was in tune with the Labour Party's embrace of the creative industries. These

were perceived as a significant source of new jobs and export revenues that would contribute to the re-branding of “what it means to be British” in a world increasingly characterised by “global flows of finance, information and images” (Freedman, 2000:312; also DCMS, 1998; Frith, 1999:5). Thus encouraged by government, the BBC has promoted itself as Britain’s national champion in global markets “bringing the best of British culture, both classic and contemporary, and the highest standards of journalistic integrity and authority to audiences all over the world” (BBC, 2000:30).

However, cultural objectives and the desire to serve the needs of the domestic audience as citizens are not always compatible with the industrial goals associated with international competitiveness, export markets and the interests of consumers and business. This constitutes the core dilemma of policy approaches to television exports, a dilemma which became clearly evident in the Labour government’s approach to the creative industries (see Blanchard, 2001). On the one hand there is the economic desire to promote British television *globally* as part of the ‘creative industries’ by increasing exports with the BBC playing a key role as Britain’s best known media brand. On the other hand government policy wishes to promote a distinctive *national* broadcasting landscape that serves socially diverse and multicultural British audiences as a point of cultural identification and allegiance.

Is public service television bad for exports?

Before 1999 television exports never constituted a specific focus of Government interest. But a growing trade deficit fuelled by satellite television imports attracted greater attention. In 1999 the Department of Media, Culture and Sport [DCMS] published *Building a Global Audience: British Television in Overseas Market*, a research report supported by industry and Government and commissioned from the consultants, David Graham and Associates (DCMS, 1999b). This report blamed public service culture at home for what was perceived as Britain’s poor performance in overseas markets, and a growing trade deficit of £272 million by 1997 (p. 8). British drama was described as “too dark; too slow; unattractive; too gritty or socio-political” (p. 24) with “distasteful characters, storylines” and downmarket lifestyles that reinforced a negative image of Britain (p. 25). British programme-makers failed to produce enough episodes of serial/series drama for longer runs and did not co-produce enough programming. Changing that would enhance access to international markets, particularly in Western Europe (pp. 29-31). It concluded that a public-service inspired regulatory culture that prioritised domestic audiences made the ‘wrong’ type of television for international consumption (p. 32). If Britain was to do better it would have to adopt a more commercial model of production (pp. 32-3).

The Government never endorsed the finding that British exporters were underperforming, and a subsequent report by industry representatives for the DCMS Creative Industries Task Force [CITF] refuted the accusation of export under-performance (DCMS, 1999a). The department simply noted “the healthy export position” and the importance of ensuring that improvements did not occur “at the expense of the home broadcasting market” (DCMS, 2000). Interestingly the steep rise in US imports by satellite and cable channels in the 1990s was never tackled because this would have meant engaging with satellite television operator, BSkyB, part of Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation, with whom Labour has sought cordial relations.

However, international competitiveness and deregulation remained at the heart of the Government’s 2003 Communications Act, with the intention of making Britain “home to the most dynamic and competitive communications and media market in the world” (DTI/DCMS, 2000:10). In the debate surrounding the Communications Act, the production and the programme supply market became an object of concern amid accusations that restrictive practices by broadcasters, and particularly the BBC, were at the root of Britain’s ‘poor’ competitive performance overseas (see PACT, 2002:3).

In a report commissioned in 2002 from the outgoing regulatory authority, the Independent Television Commission [ITC] on the programme supply market, the BBC’s treatment of independent producers was labelled as “at best opaque and slow, and at worst disingenuous and manipulative” (ITC, 2002, appendix. 3:7). Concerns were raised that free-to-air broadcasters, foremost the BBC, had excessive market power to retain secondary and tertiary rights from independent commissions for exploitation at home and abroad. This, they argued, reduced Britain’s capacity to be an effective exporter by inhibiting the growth and international potential of a fragmented independent production sector, which was not able to build assets and attract investment on the back of properties it had developed and created.

The proposed ITC Review changes were incorporated into the 2003 Communications Act. New terms of trade based on codes of practice and enforced by a new regulatory authority, Ofcom, came into force in 2004 and only allow broadcasters in the first instance to acquire primary rights to broadcast programmes they have commissioned for a limited number of runs (Ofcom 2003). The new rules require separate negotiations with distributors connected with broadcasters about secondary and tertiary rights, and at arms length from negotiations with the commissioning broadcaster. BBC Worldwide, the BBC’s commercial subsidiary and in-house distributor, still has privileged access to BBC in-house productions but will now have to compete much harder to retain the right to market the best independent productions in secondary and overseas markets. The producers association (PACT) estimated that the new rules will cost the BBC £31 million per annum in lost rights and payments for re-runs (see Waller, 2004).

It has yet to be discerned how the new rules will affect the capabilities of BBC Worldwide to compete effectively as an international distributor, but

some of its largest hits, particularly in the children's sector (*Teletubbies*, *Tweenies*, *Fimbles*), have come from the independent sector. More ominously, criticism of the Corporation's commercial activities has pushed onto the agenda such options as selling off BBC Worldwide or forcing the BBC to allow external distributors to sell its programming. This happens just as the BBC heads towards the renewal of its Charter in 2006 (Elliot, 2003; PACT, 2004).⁶ Following an internal BBC review, the option of selling off BBC Worldwide was rejected in December 2004 and Worldwide will be encouraged to increase its profits to £75 million by 2006 by launching global pay TV channels, including children's channels (Holmwood, 2004:3). Other options, such as forcing the BBC to increase levels of programming commissioned from the independent sector (currently set at 25 per cent), would also affect its global ambitions because independent producers would retain the right to market these programmes in secondary and tertiary markets at home and overseas.⁷ Without such rights the possibilities for the BBC to generate commercial revenues from international exploitation are obviously reduced.

BBC Worldwide's global strategies

The BBC's commercial activities are undertaken by BBC Worldwide, a wholly owned subsidiary. In 2003/2004, BBC Worldwide's group turnover totalled £569.9 million, comprising £239.8 million from overseas revenues and £330.1 million from Britain (BBC Worldwide, 2004). Its function is to maximise the value of BBC assets for the benefit of the licence fee payer, with any profits reinvested in programming funded by the licence fee. In 2003/2004 cashflow returned to the BBC totalled £141 million on a total turnover of £657.2 million⁸ (BBC Worldwide, 2004). However, this needs to be set against a total investment by the Corporation in original production of £1.2 billion in 2001/2002 (BBC, 2002:4). In 1997 BBC Worldwide was set the target of delivering £210 million to the Corporation on turnover of £1 billion by 2007.

Unlike rival distributors, BBC Worldwide is accountable to its parent, the BBC, rather than to shareholders. As a subsidiary of a public corporation it is subject to other restrictions, designed to draw distinctions between its public and commercial activities. For example, it must not contravene European rules on State Aid by subsidising commercial activities from licence fee income. It must also abide by the BBC's Fair Trading Commitment, an obligation stemming from the BBC Charter and Agreement, which stipulates that it must only engage in commercial activities consistent with and supportive of the BBC's role as a public service broadcaster (BBC Worldwide, 2004). As a commercial subsidiary, it must not risk licence fee funds and it is required to pay for the commercial rights to BBC programmes at 'fair' rates.

International sales of completed programmes are the most obvious international activity. But these are becoming increasingly less important as a

source of revenues than as a platform for generating more valuable ancillary business from publishing, video/DVD and consumer products, generated by key branded programme properties in the catalogue.⁹ Broadcast exposure is used to build awareness of key properties, allowing revenues to be generated from ancillary markets. In 2004 BBC Worldwide sold 40,000 hours of programming overseas. But more than half of its revenues (£341.2 million out of £657.2 million in 2003/04) were earned from publishing and new media activities closely aligned to the development of global brands, which became a core strategy in 1997. Global brands accounted for 23 per cent of all revenues in 2000/01 (BBC Worldwide, 2001). They include factual entertainment programming (*The Blue Planet*, the *Walking with Dinosaurs* franchise), formats (*The Weakest Link*) and children's shows (*Teletubbies*, *The Fimbles*, *Tweenies*). By 2002 *Teletubbies* had been sold to 120 countries including China (BBC Worldwide, 2002b: 16), generating £116 million in sales since launch for Worldwide but an estimated £1 billion at retail (BBC Worldwide, 2003c).

Alongside children's programmes, entertainment formats such as *The Weakest Link* also form an increasingly important part of the global brand strategy. BBC Worldwide began a concerted attempt to develop formats in the late 1990s, investing more than £300 million a year (£60,000 per show) into pilots developed by BBC Entertainment including *The Weakest Link*, *Friends Like These* and *Dog Eat Dog* (Waller, 2000; Fry, 2002). Format sales of the *The Weakest Link*, which has aired in over eighty countries, contributed £10 million in revenues in 2001/2002 (BBC Worldwide, 2002a:6). The BBC had always sold its formats around the world, but before *The Weakest Link* it had never been involved in the production of overseas adaptations. With *The Weakest Link*, Worldwide sought to maintain control of the brand through co-production in the major territories, thus allowing it to benefit not only from the format sale but also from a production fee (Jarvis, 2001). Drama is too culturally specific to be branded, but Worldwide's participation is important for event programmes such as *The Lost World* (2 x 75 minutes) which attracted £1.4 million in co-funding, more than half the budget, from BBC Worldwide and its commercial partners, Arts & Entertainment [A&E] in the US and RTL Television in Germany (BBC Worldwide, 2002b:6).

A further international strategy involves collaboration with the private sector. The 1996 Charter allowed the BBC to develop and pursue new markets at home and abroad through commercial joint ventures without recourse to the public purse. These have found expression in a global partnership since 1997 with the American company, Discovery Communications Inc. [DCI], for high profile co-productions in factual entertainment (*Walking with Dinosaurs*, *The Human Face*, *The Blue Planet*), the launch of joint venture international channels (Animal Planet, People and Arts) and marketing support for the BBC America channel.¹⁰ These agreements acknowledged that the BBC could not 'go it alone' on a global scale, and was best positioned to exploit its production strengths and commercial ambitions in non-fiction,

particularly natural history and science, with a commercial partner (Tunstall & Machin, 1999:181-2). For example, *The Blue Planet*, the BBC's landmark eight-part series which took five years to make, would not have been made without support from BBC Worldwide and its commercial partners, foremost DCI, totalling £4.4 million or 56 per cent of the budget (BBC Worldwide, 2002b:4).

International joint venture channels provide an outlet for BBC programming and also potential insurance against selling fewer programmes in a consolidating landscape where channels are owned by fewer and fewer companies. Commercial joint venture channels such as Animal Planet with Discovery build equity. They also allow the BBC to participate in profits from advertising and subscription revenues without risk as BBC Worldwide does not share in any losses. Wholly owned-channels such as BBC World (253 million homes), BBC America (38 million homes), and BBC Prime (14.6 million homes) raise awareness of the BBC brand. BBC America, for example, focuses on British programmes that would not normally get an airing on US television and has acted as a showcase for content which has later been sold to US channels as formats (for example the sitcom *Coupling* in 2003 and the spoof docusoap, *The Office* in 2004). BBC America reflects a different perception of the BBC among the US public than in other parts of the world, which know the BBC for its news. BBC America represents instead an attempt to raise the profile of the BBC brand with a younger, urban upscale American audience who are felt to want 'edgier' television than that provided by mainstream US channels (Lee, 2002).

From the particular to the universal

Government policy initiatives and the BBC's global strategies give an indication of changing priorities on the international stage, and the diversification of business away from television sales towards international channels and the exploitation of formats and tertiary rights (video/DVD, consumer products). But how can these changes be measured against current trends in the flow of programming and formats? And how is the contradiction between commercial priorities and the public service mission being articulated on the global stage?

Within theoretical debates on programming and format trade flows, ranging from the cultural imperialism discourse to the more diverse range of views associated with the process and impact of globalisation, Britain and the BBC's ascribed position varies between dominance and dependency with many positions in between. Like US commercial television, which sets the lead in terms of "genres, formats, fashions and media policies" (Tunstall & Machin, 1999:2), the globalising influence of British public service television has involved more than just exports. It extends to investment in overseas pro-

ductions and the establishment of international channels (BBC America, BBC World) and commercial joint ventures (Animal Planet, People and Arts). It encompasses the emulation of British formats and production practices; the adaptation of British policy models for a dual system of private and public broadcasting; and the use of British creative talent, particularly in other English-speaking territories (also O'Regan, 2000:304). The key difference between Britain and the US in terms of impact has been the distinction between the public service and commercial model. But it is the commercial model that has proved to be ascendant in world markets, including Britain. This has implications for what is produced in Britain and exported, reflecting the shifting emphasis of the BBC's engagement with international markets.

The Dependency Perspective

In keeping with cultural imperialism discourse, there is the notion of Britain as a victim of American dominance. This renders Britain subject to American capital control with large volumes of US television programmes undermining British identity, homogenising culture, encouraging consumerism and the maintenance of the social status quo (see Herman and McChesney, 1997).

Actually the BBC and other free-to-air channels are not flooded with US exports and are extraordinarily resistant to imports from non-English speaking countries, notably geographically proximate neighbours in Europe. But British television, including the BBC, is influenced by American scheduling and promotional practices, programming forms, and policy trends, all of which infers that British content is increasingly being shaped to meet commercial objectives with a "more US or internationally-focused product mix" (Joint Committee, para. 248: 65). This trend is likely to intensify following the removal of foreign ownership rules in the 2003 Communications Act that would allow US companies to take-over ITV or Channel 5.

This raises questions about what type of programming is likely to be made for diverse British audiences in the future? The further integration of British television into a more commercial globalised television economy suggests not only more imports, but also the development of programmes and formats that can be exported to a wider international audience – and potentially at the expense of distinctive and diverse programming created specifically for British audiences (Channel 4, 2002:7-8).

A variation of the dependency perspective sees Britain not as a victim of US media imperialism, but as "surrogate Americans" (O'Regan, 2000:312), a "junior media partner" (Tunstall, 1977) or "low profile allies" of the US (Tunstall & Machin, 1999:15). This stems from the view that Britain forms part of the Anglophone culture that dominates global media and communications. According to Tunstall (1977), Britain and the US are linked in a form of Anglo-imperialism where English-language media exports and influence predated and paved the way for the emergence of the US as a major eco-

conomic force in global communications and the media. From this perspective, the BBC's contribution has rather less to do with the creation of a global cultural commons based on public service principles and rather more to do with the dissemination of "a product that is as internationally persuasive and pervasive as any other global corporation" (Creeber, 2004:28).

A Public Service Alternative – Clearly British

A different view sees Britain, and the BBC in particular, as a complementary public service alternative to the trade dominance of US-led commercial television; as a niche purveyor of 'high' culture in the form of documentaries, innovative comedy and sitcoms, complex thrillers and period drama. According to Miller (drawing on Bourdieu, 1984) it is the sort of programming that is 'accessible' and attractive to an elite endowed with educational, financial and cultural capital (Miller, 2000:178). According to O'Regan, it reflects "one international brand image of British television content as a provider of a certain kind of content: middle-class fare skewed in various ways towards the maintenance and reproduction of a literary and cultural heritage" (O'Regan, 2000:304). Often these programmes are linked to stereotypical, 'imaginary' forms of 'Britishness', particularly in fiction, with "a rigidly but harmoniously hierarchized class society" (Collins, 1990:158) that "may have little to do with the real Britain and more to do with foreign imaginings of it" (O'Regan, 2000:318).

The heyday of these 'elevated' types of exports can be traced back to a time when British television was more insular and less subject to external influence. As an "introverted culture" (Pieterse, 1995:62), British television offered something different from commercial fare in some markets. Miller, for example, argues that British ideas, genres and forms were assimilated to create new forms of American programming with a 'quality' previously associated only with the import (2000:166). He suggests, for example, that American family-based mini-series such as *Rich Man, Poor Man* (ABC 1975) and even the serial *Dallas* (CBS) owe a debt to *The Forsyte Saga*, a family-based serialised costume drama from the BBC that aired on the US Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) in 1969 (Ibid:165-7).

From the 1980s onwards, British drama exports tended to focus more heavily on short-run serial thrillers, detective series with self-contained episodes, and literary or historical dramas. According to Alvarado (2000) there was a conscious decision by the BBC in the early 1990s to prioritise literary adaptations (*Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Middlemarch*, *Our Mutual Friend*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Gormenghast*). These were not ratings successes at home, but then sold in the US and fulfilled a public service obligation in respect of 'cultural heritage' (2000:315). More importantly still, they attracted US co-production funding, first from the Public Broadcasting Service [PBS] affiliate WGBH (Boston) for its long-running *Masterpiece Theatre* strand¹¹, and in the 1990s

from the cable channel, A&E, which co-funded 'event' drama in a strategy designed to attract upscale audiences, thus emulating its PBS counterpart.

However, the appeal of a complimentary distinctly British 'quality' alternative compared to the broader appeal of American entertainment and fiction has tended to restrict acceptance to the margins – to lower rating niche outlets in the secondary cable and satellite sector rather than mainstream television. In particular, it restricts circulation to those outlets that have been influenced by and share a public service ethos with British television and the BBC. Such outlets are exemplified by the geo-cultural and institutional proximity of the minority appeal PBS in America, whose own budget shortfalls have always made it a strong buyer of BBC 'prestige' drama and documentaries, and more recently pre-school programming. At PBS, 'Britishness' has always been a selling point and, in the case of drama, the connection with a longstanding literary tradition is part of the appeal in terms of its 'integrity' and 'authenticity' (Eaton, 2002). However, this may have been achieved at the expense of developing 'quality' American contemporary fiction (see Smith, 2002:181-2).

The appeal of a complimentary alternative to commercial television also extends to public service channels in English-speaking countries with colonial links, and to institutionally proximate public service channels in Western Europe and Japan (NHK). For example, public service buyers in smaller anglophile or geographically close territories such as Sweden and the Netherlands are unable to support a wide range of expensive fiction productions because of a limited pool of domestic talent and smaller budgets. They buy BBC programmes that fit their perceptions of the public service remit in terms of variety, and even personal preference. Top-sellers include detective serials in the Netherlands where British detective series are showcased in a special peak-time 'Detectives' slot on the first channel.

But a greater 'cultural discount' prevails in larger European territories due to issues of language, style, the slowness of pace and content. Buyers in Germany, France, Italy and Spain believe that their audiences either prefer domestic drama or are more 'used to' a particular US look, which is 'lighter' and more appealing with casts that audiences recognise and find attractive. This contrasts with British drama, which is frequently perceived as too typically British in its language, behaviour, and settings (Steemers, 2004). Growing demand for domestic drama has therefore restricted buyer interest largely to thrillers and detective series that highlight European expectations of 'British tradition', 'mute' comedies like *Mr Bean*, or very rarely co-produced literary drama (e.g. *Dr Zhivago*), which exhibits transnational appeal.¹²

Moreover, public service broadcasters have come under pressure in the last two decades, with many losing market share or a dominant market position to commercial rivals, thus requiring a strategic repositioning. In America, PBS lost ExxonMobil's commercial sponsorship of the *Masterpiece Theatre* strand in 2004 amid efforts to place more emphasis on locally-originated drama that connects with the younger audiences that underpin its future

legitimacy and survival (Eaton, 2002; Marlow, 2001:8). The Australian ABC finds itself similarly under pressure to raise levels of domestic production, with accusations that it has been too “slavish in its adoption of British models, its preparedness to employ English migrants at the expense of those of a non-English-speaking background, and its implicit devaluation of local life experiences not drawn from a particular middle-class and Anglophile cultural experience” (O’Regan, 2000:316). In New Zealand, public broadcaster TVNZ while still dominant in the ratings, was transformed into “a state-owned enterprise operating on commercial profit-making principles” in the 1980s (Lealand, 1996:216). These commercial priorities contributed to a break in its traditional trading relationship with Britain, leading to a greater emphasis on trade with commercial broadcasters in Australia, whose exports now exceed those of Britain.

Meanwhile, major purchasers of drama such as A&E in the US have matured since the 1980s, raising levels of domestically-produced commissions. In a quest to define its own brand and appeal to a particular target audience, A&E has become less accommodating about British fiction compared with drama that transcends cultural barriers. For example, *The Lost World* is an adaptation of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s dinosaur fantasy, starring US actor Peter Falk. It could be heavily promoted as “a kind of British that’s very accessible to an American audience” because the story was known and did not unfold primarily in Britain (Fine, 2002). This stood in contrast to British-based BBC thrillers like *Dalziel and Pascoe* and *Silent Witness*, which attracted audiences that were considered too old and too female to attract advertisers (Ibid.).

The shrinking status of the BBC’s PSB counterparts in other territories, the growing maturity of secondary outlets that no longer purchase such high levels of British programming, and the perception that British programming is linked to a “restrained, stuffy, literary, class-conscious, even paternalist system” (O’Regan, 2000:317), has forced BBC Worldwide to become more outward-looking in its overseas commercial relationships and less reliant on older but essentially one-way relationships with other public service broadcasters. This approach would appear to corroborate Tunstall and Machin’s view that a British regulatory framework that promoted public-service-inspired programming as a bulwark against imports in fact acted as a barrier to exports (1999:8). British television that was “inward-looking, parochial, and focused on lovable, somewhat caricatured, British idiosyncrasy and eccentricity...did not make for mass exporting success” (Ibid:8).

Britain, Britishness and a British concept of public service ‘quality’ is no longer a selling point because the international broadcasting landscape has moved on. Even if there was a golden era of British costume drama and documentary exports, it could also be argued that this had less to do with sharing public service values and contributing to a global cultural commons, and much more to do with the imposition of a particularly British view of public service which may have prevented others, particularly in the English-speaking territories, from developing their own distinctive public service ‘quality’.

Leaving Britain behind – formats, documentaries and children's programming

The vast majority of television is still inherently local and, given a choice, most people prefer home-grown programming to imports (see Morley and Robins, 1989:28; Sinclair, Jacka & Cunningham, 1996:10). If local content is not available audiences will choose programming that is “closest or most proximate to their own culture” (Straubhaar, 2000:202). This ties in with Hoskins and Mirus’ concept of ‘cultural discount’ – the idea that cultural differences relating to style, values, beliefs, institutions and behavioural patterns will limit the appeal of foreign programmes (1988:500). Industrial, institutional and cultural conditions peculiar to each territory, and the way life is lived and how television is presented to the public, therefore affect the circulation of overseas programming with local tradition and cultural practices underpinning substantial variations in television schedules. This preference for local programming is reflected in declining revenues from sales of completed programmes. These represented just over 40 per cent of British export revenues in 2003, down from 75 per cent in 1998 (BTDA, 2004). Revenue growth has instead come from licensing, video/DVD, co-production and formats, which now represent almost 60 per cent of revenues.

To appeal to maturing markets, content owners are increasingly customising their programming and formats, both eradicating and assimilating cultural difference to take account of local cultures. Global companies customise their formats, channels and products to appeal to differentiated local markets in order to maximise revenues. At the same time local producers “draw on the codes and conventions...of the global popular to stamp their own product, channel, distribution network as ‘professional’, ‘competitive’ and attractive to audiences and, more importantly, [to] advertisers’ who sell transnational products” (Boyd-Barrett, 1997:16). Robertson calls this overlapping combination of global, regional and local forces ‘glocalisation’ – the global production of the local and the localisation of the global in a process involving both homogenising and heterogenising forces that combine and incorporate the particular and the universal to create a reworked, hybridised diversity (Robertson, 1995:40; 1994:38).

One manifestation of glocalisation and the decline in the sale of completed programmes, which are subject to ‘cultural discount’ and low prices, is to market formats that can be produced locally in overseas markets. The sale of formats has less to do with “the rejuvenation of the British brand” and the production of “positive, glossy, mainstream drama series” (DCMS, 1999b:26) and rather more to do with adaptation to suit very distinctive local preferences where the notion of ‘Britain’ does not feature at all. It applies to the BBC’s most publicised export success of the late 1990s, the knowledge-based quiz format, *The Weakest Link*, which offered a new twist on quiz show formats for peak-time audiences. The incorporation of local contestants, hosts and questions satisfied demand internationally for cost-effective domestically

produced programmes in prime time, defined by Frances Bonner (2003) as 'ordinary television' featuring 'ordinary people', which is rarely imported in its original form. Increasingly such format sales are much more about selling production expertise and know-how that strengthens a brand and its associated spin-offs rather than simply selling the format. For BBC Worldwide, formats like *The Weakest Link* and *Dog Eat Dog* (both sold to NBC in the US), can prove more valuable than straight sales because they give access to more profitable peak-time periods and mainstream channels, particularly in America. However, in spite of the hyperbole surrounding formats and local production these actually accounted for less than 7 per cent of UK sales (\$63 million) in 2003, with a small number of key programmes (*The Weakest Link*) accounting for the majority of export earnings (BTDA, 2004).

At the next level there are opportunities for local adaptation and translation of British-produced programming to create something that is not recognisably British for overseas audiences. Children's shows such as *Teletubbies*, *Tweenies*, and *The Fimbles* can be revoiced, and transmission provides a platform for valuable ancillary revenues from consumer products (i.e., merchandising). Factual event programming including universally appealing natural history and CGI-laden [computer generated image] epics such as *Walking with Dinosaurs*, are not only revoiced. They cultivate the entertainment story-driven value of non-fiction and the creation of ageless 'uncontroversial' programmes that can be re-aired on outlets in global markets. For example, commercial channels like Telecinco in Spain and Pro Sieben in Germany purchased *Walking With Dinosaurs* from the BBC because of the drama of bringing dinosaurs to life as an entertaining spectacle for peak-time viewing, rather than for its public service credentials.

But programming that obscures its origins does not build audience expectations for more British product or create a platform for significant cross-cultural exchange as any alternative to the regime of marketisation (see Cunningham & Jacka, 1996:170). There are also risks from the temptation to make programmes that meet the needs of the economically powerful US marketplace rather than the needs of domestic audiences. This was highlighted by Paul Hamann, former BBC Head of Documentaries and History, who argued, "Discovery is a fantastic brand in celebrating the world around you and that's an important part of the role that the BBC has to play to its viewers. But another important part is having programmes challenging politicians, investigating the world and the government around us. I don't see many of those programmes on American television as a whole" (cited in Keighron, 2002:15).

Formats, pre-school programming and factual entertainment are all forms of programming that can be indigenised and adapted to the receiving culture. In a market hungry for programmes with global appeal, the BBC is acclaimed for placing *The Weakest Link* on the NBC network in the USA while British exporters are criticised for selling 'gritty, dark' dramas that reflect British life (DCMS, 1999b:24). More and more programming is "internationally integrated

at a programme inception level” in an interplay of the global and local (O’Regan, 2000:319). In their more ‘universal’ appeal the programmes that result are quite different from the identifiably British historical or literary-based drama on which Britain’s international success was historically based (see Alvarado, 2000).

Implications and conclusions

Similarities in ethos between British public service broadcasters and their European counterparts mean that PSB companies remain important buyers of BBC public-service-imbued drama, documentary and children’s programming in a predominantly one-way relationship. But mainstream commercial television, with its emphasis on longer-running fiction series and feature films, which are not a strong feature of British catalogues, constitutes a more difficult market for British exporters, including the BBC. Confined largely to the margins of mainstream schedules or the secondary cable and satellite market, British programmes produced in Britain for British audiences are not widely promoted and have a limited cultural impact elsewhere. The idea that television exports might function as a showcase for Britishness is contradicted by the realities of an international marketplace where ‘Britishness’ is not a major selling point. This complication is compounded by the lack of ownership of distribution outlets to ensure a more permanent presence for BBC programming in global markets.

The key to success in overseas markets has shifted to suppressing the national origins of programming through formats, production technique and the choice of subject matter that actually seek to hide any remnants of ‘otherness’. For a public service broadcaster grounded in serving the nation, there are inherent dangers in serving the international marketplace at the expense of distinctive and diverse programming created specifically for domestic audiences. A comparison of the benefits and disadvantages of international engagement also raises questions about whether it is right that the BBC should function as a national champion for British exports on the global stage at the expense of possibly losing part of its distinctive identity to become just another global brand?

First, although BBC Worldwide is the largest exporter of British programmes, its turnover from overseas sales (£239.8 million in 2003/04) pails to insignificance compared with the BBC’s investment in original production (£1.2 billion in 2001/2002). BBC Worldwide’s total contribution to the BBC was £141 million in 2004, which is proportionately very small and suggests that international commercial activities are unlikely to constitute a substantial supplement to licence fee funding, particularly if BBC Worldwide fails to become the distributor of choice for independent producers. The financial argument for entrepreneurial international engagement is therefore tenuous.

Second, evidence for a shift in emphasis from programming with a distinctive public service purpose to programming that obscures its national and public service origins in order to appeal to differentiated overseas markets affects the nature of the institution and the programmes it produces. Some forms of high budget drama, factual entertainment, and children's programming are no longer made unless co-funding can be secured from overseas markets. This necessitates compromises that heighten the appeal of programming to overseas buyers but detract from the unique qualities that underpin the BBC's claim to cater for diverse, multicultural audiences at home.

Third, Government-inspired policies to make the BBC more commercially active overseas have raised difficulties with commercial rivals. They resent its exclusive access to the licence fee, which is perceived as giving the Corporation an unfair advantage, however much it seeks to underline the separation of its commercial and public service activities. Increasingly the Corporation looks like a hybrid organisation. The BBC's performance also has to be set against the possible detrimental effect that BBC Worldwide's activities may have had on independent producers in the global marketplace. They made a strong case that the BBC abused its position in the market to secure an unfair share of rights for overseas exploitation. If independent producers succeed in making more money overseas, then the argument for reining in BBC Worldwide's control of rights to independent productions will have been vindicated in economic terms. But there will still be editorial pressures to commission internationally attractive programmes that can be partially funded overseas.

Finally, one can't help feeling that the corporatisation of the BBC and its positioning as a global player, driven by commercial priorities, has closed off alternative global alliances and cultural exchanges, particularly with other public institutions. These might have helped challenge not only the growing power of transnational media conglomerates, but also the "centralized notions of national identity previously upheld and maintained by large, powerful conglomerates like the BBC" (Creeber, 2004:35). Murdoch sees the BBC's pledge last year to make many of its recordings freely available on the Internet as "a powerful ethical alternative to the pay-per regime of marketization and a potential basis for the global cultural commons" (2004: 35). But as the value of programming increases, it is doubtful whether rights-holders, increasingly from the independent sector, would allow this to occur without substantial recompense. Rather the BBC has sought to emulate commercial players or form alliances with them, thus breaking down the walls that distinguish PSB from the market. Commercial participation in global markets makes it hard to withstand the pressures to promote brand identity and internationally marketable programmes at the expense of more identifiable public service content. Combined with commercialisation and privatisation, this has consequences for public service broadcasting's ability to encourage democratic participation among its citizens with content that really reflects the varied political and cultural life of the domestic marketplace (see Murdoch & Golding, 1989).

Notes

1. This is based on the assumption that the system as a whole, including commercially-funded free-to-air broadcasters (ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5) has been guided by public service principles.
2. Britain's peak-time share of 13 per cent was more than six times larger than closest rivals, France and Australia (2 per cent each) (DCMS, 1999a: 33).
3. Spooks (Kudos) and Tweenies (Tell-Tale) are of course BBC commissions from independent producers.
4. The evidence is drawn from industry interviews with television buyers and executives undertaken between 2001-2003. More detailed findings are available in Jeanette Steemers, *Selling Television: British Television in the Global Marketplace* (London: British Film Institute: 2004).
5. This does not apply to joint venture channels overseas and at home (UKTV) with commercial partners, which do not use the BBC corporate branding.
6. The Charter Review process began in December 2003 in anticipation of a government White Paper published in February 2005. OFCOM has conducted a review of public service television throughout 2004, whose results will feed into the government's review of the BBC's Charter.
7. Under new proposals announced following a BBC internal review in December 2004, the independent quota remains at 25 per cent, but a further 25 per cent of commissions will be opened up to the 'window of creative competition' (WOCC) (Holmwood, 2004: 2-3)
8. Including the BBC's £87.3 million share of joint ventures in 2003/2004.
9. Between 1997/1998 and 2003/2004, programme sales as a proportion of total sales declined from 31 per cent (£126 million) to just over 26 per cent (£175.3 million)
10. In Britain they encompass a deal with Flextech Television, the content division of Telewest Communications, for the supply of commercial subscription channels under the UKTV brand. Other international joint venture channels have been launched with commercial partners in the key English-speaking markets of Canada (BBC Canada, BBC Kids with Alliance Atlantis Communications) and Australia (UKTV with FremantleMedia).
11. The strand was established in 1971
12. 2003 statistics reveal that Europe accounted for only \$5 million of British co-production revenues, compared to \$108 million from the US (BTDA, 2004). www.c21media.net/features/detail.asp?area=2&article=450 (accessed December 2003). Waller, E. (2004) Independence Day for UK Indies. C21 Media, 8 January 2004. Available at www.c21media.net/common/print_detail.asp?article=18805.
13. ExxonMobil ended its sponsorship of the PBS Mystery! strand featuring British crime drama in 1993. In 2001 Mystery! became a summer strand, reflecting a desire to free up the schedule to show more American drama.

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The Trial by Fire of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

Lessons for Public Broadcasting

Marc Raboy & David Taras

The case of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation highlights many of the dilemmas facing public broadcasting. If European and other public broadcasters have not yet experienced the trial by fire that has characterised the recent history of the CBC, this case may signal what lies ahead.

First of all, Canadians have been dealing with the push-and-pull of domestic or national versus global or transnational broadcasting since the early days of radio. Most Canadians live within signal distance of the U.S. border, so the issues arising from cross-border broadcasting have been with them from the beginning. Long before satellites, long before cheap imports, long before “globalization” or even “Americanization” became popular buzzwords, Canadians had to face the reality that if there were to be such a thing as “Canadian broadcasting” at all, it would certainly not result from unregulated market forces. As one famous dictum of the day had it, Canadians had a choice between “the State or the United States”.

Once this reality had set in – by the late 1920s – Canadian legislators attacked the question of broadcasting structure. Canadians want Canadian programming, a 1928 royal commission declared, and the best way to provide it would be by creating a BBC-type public corporation, publicly funded and mandated to oversee all broadcasting in Canada. Easier said than done. Unlike in most of the west European countries, more like in the neighbouring United States, broadcasting was already operating in the private sector. Indeed, many Canadian radio stations in the 1920s and 1930s were affiliates of the US commercial networks. Canada’s first Broadcasting Act, passed in 1932, established a national broadcasting commission and gave it authority to nationalize all existing broadcasting outlets, with compensation. The private broadcasters called foul. Four years later, this commission would become the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, but the plan for a public service monopoly never got off the ground. Thus and secondly, public and private broadcasting in Canada began an uneasy coexistence which continues unto this day.

A third set of tensions marking the evolution of Canadian broadcasting revolves around issues that we would describe today as concerning cultural

diversity. From the beginning, Canada's two main linguistic groups have claimed and demanded equal access to the broadcasting system. Struggles around broadcasting have been part and parcel of the broader struggles to define the Canadian nation-state, polity and culture. The CBC, for example, operates as a single national corporation but provides a full range of equivalent services in both English and French, from coast to coast. This has resulted in an interesting paradox: public broadcasting, deemed to be an essential instrument for promoting national unity, actually provides often different and sometimes conflicting views of Canada and the world, reinforcing what author Hugh MacLennan famously referred to as Canada's "two solitudes".

This history, fascinating in and of itself, is rich in lessons for other societies grappling with the role and future of public broadcasting. Put briefly, it illustrates that broadcasting can not contribute seriously to social and cultural development without a major public policy commitment to the enabling environment for broadcasting; public broadcasters have a central role to play in this environment; and it is not reasonable for politicians and other social actors to expect broadcasting to solve society's problems. A reasonable expectation is that broadcasting portray and reflect a given society, where it came from and where it is at, while indicating the possibilities that lie ahead. Most of all, the measure of success for any broadcasting system, and especially a public broadcaster, should be the extent to which it empowers people to act fully as citizens on the issues before them.

In this chapter we describe the challenges that now face Canada's national public broadcaster; the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation/Radio-Canada [CBC]. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is one of the world's venerable public broadcasting institutions. According to OECD statistics, it is also one of the most cash starved. Public expectations of the CBC run high, but audience figures are low. The CBC is meant to be all things to all Canadians, but it is increasingly absent in local and regional markets. The CBC is an innovator, pioneering specialised television channels and Internet programming. But its regulator, the CRTC, would like it to focus on conventional services. The CBC has both friends and enemies in high places, and a public which clamours for more and for better from the CBC.

We will situate the CBC within the Canadian media landscape, describe the financial and regulatory pressures and decisions that have weakened the CBC, examine public attitudes towards public and private broadcasters and discuss proscriptions for change as outlined in the recommendations of the Lincoln Report¹ – the most comprehensive review of Canadian broadcasting to have been undertaken in a generation. We will argue that financial, regulatory and political pressures have wounded the public broadcaster to the point where its future is in jeopardy. At the very time that public broadcasting has re-emerged as a vital tool for national and democratic expression, the CBC dangles close to the edge of extinction. We will also describe what we believe are the lessons that others can learn from the CBC's trial by fire.

Canadian broadcasting today

Canadians live in one of the most globalized societies on the planet. We have gone in a relatively short period from being a largely insular and narrow society at the fringes of global power and decision-making to being one of the great meeting places of the world. To begin with, Canada has since the Second World War taken in more immigrants per capita than any other country. On a per capita basis there are simply more people from more places living in Canada than can be found almost anywhere else in the world. Our great cities – Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver – have become global cities where international commerce and connections, let alone food, music and faces, are everywhere. Moreover, as travellers, traders and investors Canadians can be found almost anywhere. There are over 200 million annual border crossings between Canada and the United States alone. Canada helped found almost all of the world's international organisations and has played a key role in their operations. Considering the current rhetoric about how globalized the world has become, the reality is that few countries have embraced the world to the extent that Canada has.

One can also argue that Canada is among the best places in the world to watch television. One only has to compare broadcasting in Canada to the United States to realise how international our broadcasting choices are. Despite recent squabbles over the fact that Canadian satellite and cable providers can't carry the American cable channel, HBO, or the Italian state broadcaster, RAI, Canadians can on any given day watch news broadcasts from Paris, London, Rome, New York, Sydney or New Delhi. TV5 is an international broadcasting co-operative that links Canada to francophone broadcasters around the world. Vision TV is at the forefront of multi-faith programming globally, airing programs produced by over 70 different religious organisations. Canadians have access to digital channels that broadcast in Mandarin, Tamil, Portuguese, Spanish, Hindi, Punjabi, Korean, and Cantonese among other languages. Indeed there are multiple Portuguese and Tamil TV services.

And, of course, there is the relentless crush of American programs from all of the major US broadcasters. When it comes to certain TV genres such as drama and sitcoms, English-speaking Canadians watch American TV shows virtually all of the time.

One of the critical issues that Canadians are facing is how to maintain our own avenues of communication when our airwaves are filled with so many signals from so many different places. While many Canadians feel they have almost an inalienable right to receive TV programs from wherever they wish, and indeed the Canadian broadcasting system has gone a long way towards accommodating that need, this cannot presumably be at the expense of a country's need to communicate with itself – to keep its own channels of communication open and available. In most of the world's advanced post-industrialised countries, it is the public broadcaster that serves as the linchpin of national cultures. But this is no longer the case in Canada.

Some analysts believe that we are entering a new era in which public broadcasting is more essential than ever. They argue that commercial broadcasters have largely failed to produce programs that link people to their national experience and that address their needs as citizens. While commercial broadcasting will no doubt continue to expand, governments in many countries realise that circumstances have come full circle – their futures depend on the quality of their public broadcasters. According to writer and philosopher, John Ralston Saul, “Everybody who is smart in bureaucracies and governments around the Western World now knows that public broadcasting is one of the most important remaining levers that a nation state has to communicate with itself” (Cobb, 2001). To Saul, the failure of global media conglomerates such as Disney and Time Warner is almost complete. In his view: “What you’re watching in these gigantic mergers is the last desperate steps as the dinosaurs get bigger, bigger and bigger because they can’t feed themselves. In fact the bigger they get the more impossible it becomes to survive” (Cobb, 2001).

The CBC and the Canadian media environment

Any consideration of Canadian public broadcasting has to situate it with respect to the overall media environment in which it operates. In Canada – as elsewhere – the media system is a reflecting mirror that allows citizens to see and communicate with each other. But, for a number of particular reasons, the media system is especially crucial here. Canada has the second largest land mass in the world and spans no less than six time zones with a population that is largely nestled in patches for literally thousands of miles along the U.S. border. It has sharp and sometimes threatening linguistic and regional divisions and, as already noted, has taken in more new immigrants per capita than any country in recent history and its people are exposed to a continuous flood of media messages from the United States. Maintaining and sustaining a distinct culture and identity is arguably the main task of the Canadian media system.

The Canadian media system is complex and multidimensional. In fact, the system has so many contingent parts working on so many different levels that keeping track of its many interactions can be a dizzying experience. At the centre of this wheel is the publicly funded Canadian Broadcasting Corporation which operates two main TV networks (in English and French), two cable all-news channels, four radio networks, a northern service that reaches into the vast expanse of the Canadian North and broadcasts in a myriad of Aboriginal languages, and an international service, Radio-Canada International. The national public broadcaster receives 60 per cent of its funding in the form of an annual grant from Parliament with the remainder coming from sales and advertising. The CBC is the largest journalistic organisation in the country and is also the main showcase for original Canadian radio and television production.

But the CBC is no match for commercial broadcasters that are part of larger media conglomerates. Again international factors have played a role here. Because Canadian media companies are tiny by international standards and must compete with global giants such as Time Warner and News Corporation, the government and the CRTC have allowed Canadian companies to have the size and buying power needed to compete. Hence, the media horizon is dominated by a clutch of privately owned media conglomerates whose stables of properties include newspapers, radio and TV stations, satellite services, magazines, cable operations and sports franchises. Taken together, they tower over the CBC in terms of both revenue and audience reach.

The largest of these corporations is Bell Canada Enterprises, which owns the CTV network, Canada's most prestigious newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, a bevy of cable channels, as well as telephone and satellite services. CanWest Global, founded by the late Israel Asper, owns Canada's third TV network, Global Television, and the Southam newspaper chain which includes the *National Post*, as well as a picket fence of important regional newspapers. In the large Vancouver/Victoria market, for instance, CanWest Global owns all of the major newspapers as well as the dominant TV stations.

In Quebec, the landscape is dominated by Quebecor. It controls TVA, Quebec's most watched TV network, Vidéotron, which has a firm grip on the cable market in Quebec, important newspapers such as *Le Journal de Montréal* as well as the Sun newspaper chain which owns tabloid papers in Toronto, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton among other properties. Quebecor also produces a host of magazines, owns book and music stores and runs concert tours. It is also the largest printing company in the world. Yet another major player, Rogers Communications, owns most of the country's magazines, is Canada's largest cable provider, has a share in a number of cable and digital channels, operates dozens of radio stations, and recently purchased the Toronto Blue Jays baseball team.

The CBC is handicapped in any competition with these media giants. First, cross-media or cross-platform media conglomerates enjoy economies of scale and can assemble their audiences through a number of different vehicles. Most importantly, perhaps, they can promote their programs through the other media outlets they own. TVA's hit program *Star Académie*, for instance, is touted endlessly in magazines, newspapers and in music stores as well as on Internet sites and TV stations, all of which are owned by TVA's parent company Quebecor.

Added to the dilemma faced by the CBC is that while the Canadian media system is dominated by a handful of corporations, audiences are fragmented to a degree not found in many other countries. This is especially the case with television. There are over 250 cable and digital TV services, including ones aimed at children, the business community, Aboriginal people, older citizens, gays and religious viewers. There is also a blizzard of news, sports, ethnic and pay-per view channels. As we shall explain later, the CBC has,

with the exception of its all news channels Newsworld and RDI, been denied entry into the bounteous world of cable TV. Private broadcasters have been allowed to buy the prime beach front properties in cable TV, while the CBC has had to watch from a distance.

Canadians are also exposed to a torrent of American programming coming directly from the major U.S. networks, super-stations and cable channels, almost all of which are readily available in Canada. One of the mainstays of the Canadian broadcasting system is a policy of simultaneous substitution of signals that blocks out American advertising when both American and Canadian broadcasters are airing the same U.S. program. It also needs to be pointed out that a large number of Canadians, as many as 750,000 according to one estimate, receive unauthorised satellite services from U.S. providers and are for all intents part of the American rather than the Canadian broadcasting system.

Despite the disadvantages that the CBC has had to face, the Broadcasting Act of 1991 which governs the broadcasting system, still gives the corporation onerous responsibilities. Section 3, which is the main lever of the Act, stipulates that Canadian broadcasting is a public service, comprised of public, private and community elements, and that broadcasters must air programming that reflects "Canadian attitudes, opinions, ideas, values and artistic creativity." The most controversial parts of the Act are the sections that deal with Canadian unity and identity. The Act states that broadcasting must "serve the needs and interests, and reflect the circumstances and aspirations of Canadian men, women and children, including equal rights, linguistic duality, the multicultural and multiracial nature of Canadian society and the special place of aboriginal peoples (...)." Broadcasting is also seen as being "essential to the maintenance and enhancement of national identity and cultural sovereignty." The previous 1968 Act, which had directed the CBC to "contribute to the development of national unity," had created a swirl of controversy. The 1991 Act, which was the product of years of often painful negotiations and compromises, backed away from making national unity a goal of the system. The CBC is now expected only to "contribute to shared national consciousness and identity." But the CBC must also be in effect the living embodiment of the Act; multicultural, regional, serving minority communities, operating in both national languages and providing special services for the North.

The simple reality is that the corporation no longer has the resources or the capacity to fulfil its obligations under the Act. The CBC doesn't have enough cloth to fit the many contours and limbs of the body envisioned by the Broadcasting Act.

The CBC's battle to survive

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation was created by an Act of Parliament in 1936 (a previous national public broadcaster, the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission, operated from 1932-36.) From 1936-1958, the CBC acted not only as public broadcaster but also regulated the private radio stations which continued to exist. The CBC also had a monopoly on television in its early years. Its fortunes shifted, however, with the introduction in the late 1950s of an independent regulator, the Board of Broadcast Governors, eventually becoming the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission [CRTC] and then, in the early 1960s, private television. Nonetheless, the CBC remained the dominant cornerstone of the system well into the 1980s.²

A major policy shift in 1983 signalled a change that would contribute dramatically to a long decline of the CBC. Without rewriting any of the broad objectives of Canadian broadcasting policy and the cultural institutions that it supports, the government decided to redirect a significant portion of public funds towards developing private sector "cultural industries". A funding agency, Telefilm Canada, was created to oversee public spending on television production and the CBC went, literally overnight, from being a producer to being a programmer of commissioned works by independent producers. The impact, subtle in appearance at first, has been central to the development of Canadian broadcasting, especially television, ever since.

The CBC is faced with a structural problem that is not faced by public broadcasters in other countries. It has always had to contend with direct competition from the United States and with the power and influence of American cultural models. Canada is not insulated from the US by distance or language (except, importantly, in French) and Canadians are eager and enthusiastic consumers of all aspects of American culture. Over the years analysts have referred to the flood, the sea, the torrent, the avalanche etc. to describe the massive and constant invasion of American cultural products. What is interesting and unique is that Canadians were already exposed to American television for some years before the CBC established its first stations in 1952. In other words, American TV to some extent pre-dated Canadian TV in Canada. Loyalty to American broadcasters, and the belief that Canadians have an inalienable right to all the American culture that they can consume, runs deep.

Scholars such as John Meisel (1986) have argued that Canadian culture has become a minority culture in Canada. Much of it is contested in Quebec while in English-speaking Canada it appeals disproportionately to older, more educated and higher income groups. Canadian authors, films, art and music have their principal following among the burgeoning middle class. American culture, on the other hand, has mass appeal. This juxtaposition has consequences for the CBC which many Canadians, not surprisingly, perhaps see as distant, refined and elitist. Meisel suggests that those who mainly con-

sume American mass culture are also the most reluctant to support the CBC. The license fee which is the mainstay of financial support for public broadcasting in the UK, Germany, Italy etc. is politically unthinkable in Canada and has been so for many years.

In countries where public broadcasters rely on license fees paid annually by consumers, public broadcasters have retained their dominant positions. In countries where public broadcasters are not buttressed by these direct infusions of cash, their situation is more precarious.

Another important distinction is that the Canadian federal government, unlike most of its European counterparts, drastically cut spending in general and eliminated its deficit in the 1990s. Almost all crown corporations and institutions were downsized during this period. Cuts to the CBC, perhaps as much as 40 per cent since the 1990s, were part of a wider and determined effort to create a leaner government. The CBC was forced to close stations in key markets, curtail some of its most ambitious projects, retreat into low cost programming ghettos such as documentaries and ensemble comedy, and air some of its programs two or three times a day or a week. Talented individuals fled the CBC amid continuing rounds of layoffs and a lack of opportunity for advancement.

The Lincoln Committee's Report, for example, illustrates the vicious circle in which the CBC finds itself as dwindling resources force it to cut corners in vital areas of its mandate such as regional programming. The Report cites OECD figures showing that Canada ranks twenty-second out of 26 countries in public funding for national public broadcasters as a percentage of GDP³. A chart assembled by Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini suggests that there is a rough correlation between revenues per capita for public broadcasters and their audience share; the greater the revenues the greater the audience (Hallin and Mancini, 2004:42).

In some ways decisions taken in 1990 to close a host of local TV stations across the country proved to be a critical turning point. The strategy was to close stations in certain markets and provide viewers with regional programming. Viewers in Calgary would be served from Edmonton, in Saskatoon from Regina etc. The problem, of course, is that loyalties at the local level are integral to the success of national programming. Stations that are strong in local markets are able to build audiences and advertise their big-ticket prime time shows throughout the day. Moreover they have a continuing and often boisterous presence in the community through their extensive promotions of local personalities, events and news. At the CBC this vital connection has largely been severed. One can argue that the CBC never recovered from these deep wounds.

The Calgary situation is particularly instructive. At the time of its closing, the CBC local station had the second largest audience in what is now Canada's wealthiest and fastest growing city. The station had been making money and the prospects for fulsome profits were good. On the day the station was shut down, tens of thousands of viewers migrated to CFCN, CTV's local flag-

ship station. Despite numerous attempts by the CBC to re-style a local news show, viewers have never returned in appreciable numbers. Loyalties have shifted elsewhere and the CBC is still seen by many as having “abandoned” the city.

As mentioned above, another blow to the corporation came with the explosion of cable services in the 1980s and 1990s and digital services in the early part of this century. In some countries the expansion has occurred in a way that took account of the needs of the main public service broadcasters. In the UK, for instance, there is famously a BBC1 and BBC2 and there are now also new digital channels such as BBC4 (arts and music), CBeebies (for pre-schoolers), CBBC (for pre-teens) as well as another service for young adults. In Canada, however, the CBC has largely been denied access to the burgeoning world of cable and digital TV. The corporation only has two cable franchises: its English- and French-language all news channels, Newsworld and le Réseau de l'information (RDI). Both of these services pay for themselves via pass-through charges borne by cable customers. The many lucrative sports, children's and music channels were given to private broadcasters.

A number of formal attempts by the CBC to gain a greater foothold in the new cable universe were denied by the CRTC.⁴ There is reason to believe that the public broadcaster was dissuaded from even applying for the more profitable services. No doubt much of the recent history and fortunes of the CBC would have been different if it had been awarded franchises for a sports or children's channel. Revenues from pass-through charges and the economies of scale that might have been achieved would have provided a firmer financial basis for the corporation and a much greater audience reach.

In the end, cable and digital expansion became the corporation's greatest nemesis. First, it now has to compete against what in most Canadian homes is over 100 channels and services. The market has become so fragmented that the mass audience is quickly becoming a vestige of the past. Narrow customised “boutique” television increasingly dominates the horizon. The main private broadcasters are able to “reassemble” their audiences by owning a myriad of cable franchises. This is something that the CBC cannot do.

Even in the news area where the CBC has some pride of place because of Newsworld and RDI, competition is fierce. Its news channels have to compete against a headline news service run by CTV, a regional news channel in Ontario, CNN, CNBC, a financial news channel and of course, a torrent of local news shows. And as pointed out at the beginning, Canadians have ready access to news broadcasts from around the world. The CRTC recently decided that FOX News should be included in cable packages. If public broadcasters in other countries were faced with the sheer amount of competition that the CBC now faces, their audiences would be bound to slip.

Second, cable expansion has also meant that parts of the CBC's mandate or programming areas that were once its exclusive preserve, have been parcelled out to others. Children's television, the arts, religious programming,

programs that reflect ethnic diversity and the servicing of Aboriginal communities are now provided for by other broadcasters including other public broadcasters. Instead of expanding the role of the CBC, the CRTC allowed other public broadcasters to be created. For instance, public broadcasters such as the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network and Vision TV are competing against the CBC on what might still be considered its “territory”.

Elihu Katz, a distinguished scholar, has criticised regulators for allowing virtually any and all broadcasters – anyone who can show that they have a reasonable business model – to be granted a license. In his view, the end-less granting of licences erodes the capacity of the major broadcasters to maintain profits and produce quality programming. As Katz has put it,

Why are governments contributing to the erosion of nation-states and national cultures? Why don't they see that more leads to less to insignificance...to the atomization and evacuation of public space? Why don't they see that national identity and citizen participation are compromised? Why don't they realize that they are contributing directly to the erosion of the enormous potential which television has to enlighten and unite populations into the fold on national cultures? (Katz, 1996)

While Katz is concerned about the capacity of a society to in effect hear itself amid the clatter of so many channels and choices, the argument for a strong public broadcaster is also based on the need to provide not just another voice but a different voice. As noted earlier, private broadcasters such as CTV, TVA and Global are part of multi-media conglomerates that can endlessly promote and showcase programs through a wide variety of media platforms. Unlike its main competitors, the CBC does not own newspapers, cable operations, sports franchises, magazines, music stores or phone companies. The CBC is handicapped and out-gunned in any direct competition simply because it does not have the multiple outlets that its competitors enjoy. In some markets such as Montreal and Vancouver, the media landscape is so dominated by a single corporation that the CBC is almost the only competing voice. This gives the public broadcaster a mission that is far different from the one that was envisioned 50 or even 20 years ago.

Although the tilting of the broadcasting system toward private broadcasters is due to a number of factors including the power and skill of powerful private broadcasters as well as the work of industry lobbyists such as the Canadian Association of Broadcasters and to prevailing attitudes in the 1990s that placed particular faith in the private sector, at the end of the day the CBC seems to have had few friends at the cabinet table as well as at the CRTC. Politicians of almost all stripes have at one time or another viewed the corporation with a mixture of animosity and suspicion and believed that they could make the corporation sing to their tune.

The brutal reality is that the CBC has been allowed to become a political football.

The media watchdog group Friends of Canadian Broadcasting has reported that since 1936, 89 per cent of those appointed to the CBC's Board of Directors had been affiliated with the governing party. Since 1968, 87 per cent of appointees have been tied in some way to the party in power (Friends of Canadian Broadcasting, 2004).

Political pressures on the CBC really began during the late 1950s and 1960s.⁵ Conservative Prime Minister John Diefenbaker (1957-62) believed that the corporation had been over run by communists and had become a "mass propaganda agency." CBC programming would often send him into towering rages and he attempted to have at least one radio show, *Preview Commentary*, cancelled. When the corporation resisted his efforts, Diefenbaker retaliated by freezing the salary of CBC President Alphonse Ouimet and there is some evidence that he played a role in securing a TV license for a friend and political ally. That TV license, CFTO in Toronto, would eventually become the fulcrum and catalyst for the founding of Canada's first private network, CTV. A Liberal Prime Minister, Lester Pearson (1963-68), was no less thin-skinned. Stung by criticisms of his government, Pearson encouraged a parliamentary committee to hold public hearings into the popular and controversial program, *This Hour Has Seven Days*. The Prime Minister's Office then launched its own investigation into whether the program was politically biased. Not surprisingly, the program was cancelled.

The darkest days for the CBC in terms of political interference may have been during Brian Mulroney's Prime Ministership (1984-93). Mulroney would, according to at least one source, phone the CBC's Chair, Patrick Watson, with protestations that would range from "angry" to "subtle". He stacked the CBC board with fellow Conservatives and cut the corporation's budget. One board member, John Crispo, once suggested that cuts to the CBC's budget were made as "a down payment and a warning" following what he saw as the CBC's one-sided anti-American coverage of the Gulf War in 1991.

During the close and bitterly contested Quebec referendum on sovereignty in 1995, accusations of bias reached unprecedented proportions. Prime Minister Jean Chrétien (1993-2004) openly griped about pro-separatist leanings at Radio-Canada claiming that the network treated the sovereignist leader, Lucien Bouchard, with "kid gloves" and of ignoring at least one of his major speeches. According to at least one report which circulated, key Liberals had vowed during the referendum to close the "separatist nest" once and for all.

It is small wonder given this history that the CBC has been at the sharp end of the stick in terms of budget cuts and has been largely frozen out of the cable and digital worlds. What is perhaps most surprising is the extent to which the public broadcaster has remained vulnerable to shifting political winds. Methods and procedures that could provide insulation from political pressures could easily have been adopted over the years. The corporation could have been granted multi-year funding so that it did not have to face annual scrutiny by politicians. Recommendations made by a mandate review committee in 1996 that funding come from a special tax that would

replace the 7 per cent GST on certain media related purchases was rejected almost instantly. The Lincoln committee report suggested that the Board of Directors be comprised of people representing a variety of interests in order to prevent the government from “stacking” the board with political appointees. Indeed some of the members of the Board might be drawn from the CBC itself.

One interesting check would be to see the CBC President named by the Board, as is the case with the BBC in Britain. Again, what is remarkable is that politicians have preferred to keep the corporation within easy political reach rather than provide mechanisms that would ensure its independence.

The combination of severe budget cuts and vastly increased competition from cable and digital services produced a dramatic drop in audience numbers. In 1969, for instance, CBC television had a 35 per cent audience share, while Radio-Canada attracted 40 per cent of French-language viewers (Canada, House of Commons, 2003, p.88). By 1993 the audience for the CBC's main channels had sunk to 13 per cent of English language and just 23 per cent of the French-language viewers. By 2001-02 audience numbers on the English side had dwindled even further to just 7.5 per cent and 17.8 per cent on the English and French sides respectively (Canada, House of Commons, 2003:90). The radio story has been different however. In fact, CBC popularity seems to have risen in recent years. In Fall 2002, its Radio One and Radio Two garnered 12.3 per cent of listeners during the broadcast day – compared to 10.8 per cent in Fall 1999. The audience for *la Première Chaîne* and *la Chaîne Culturelle* rose from 9.8 in Fall 1999 to 12.4 in Fall 2002 (Canada, House of Commons, 2003:187).

The CBC responded to the decline in funding that occurred in the 1990s by concentrating on certain types of programming. The corporation realised that its budget could no longer sustain a schedule that included a wide range of programs. The new diet focused on children's programs, news and current affairs, sports (especially NHL hockey) and on special events. Its greatest gamble was a \$ 25 million production entitled *Canada: A People's History*. Broadcast in both official languages on nine Sunday nights during winter 2002, the 30-hour production attracted sizeable audiences, was sold in a CD-ROM version and was used in history and social studies classes across the country.

Another strategic CBC decision was to Canadianize its schedule. The corporation's goal is to have 100 per cent Canadian programming throughout the broadcast day. Amid so much competition from so many other broadcasters some of which broadcast in areas where the CBC once had pride of place, the corporation has at least one distinct feature – it can claim a Canadian schedule. This may be its last and best defence. Presumably Canadians will always need a place in the broadcasting universe that they can call home.

During the 2004-2005 season, the corporation continued to build its schedule around programs that had a distinctive CBC quality; a dramatic mini-series on the world wide business of sex-trafficking, another mini-series featured

a Canadian Prime Minister standing up to Americans who want to control the country's fresh water, and a TV movie about life and death decisions made in an under-funded hospital. The broadcaster also aired *Making the Cut*, a hockey reality series that put men who aspire to be hockey stars through the rigours of an NHL training camp, as well as *The Greatest Canadian*, a program adopted from European television which asked people to vote for the person whom they believed had made the greatest contribution to Canadian life. It also debuted a new dramatic series, *Ciao Bella*, about a single career woman living in Montreal's little Italy.

The public view of public broadcasting

Analysis of Canadian radio and television program schedules and audience figures also demonstrate the important place of the CBC in the deep structure of Canadian broadcasting. The Lincoln committee assembled data showing that the vast majority of *Canadian* programming exhibited and watched on Canadian television was broadcast by the CBC.⁶ To the extent that this is felt to be a positive value, there is no question that CBC remains an essential cultural institution in Canada. This view is, in fact, borne out by public opinion surveys.

In mid 2004 the lobby group Friends of Canadian Broadcasting released the findings of a national public opinion survey by the independent polling firm Ipsos-Reid, on attitudes of Canadians towards broadcasting⁷. One question asked respondents: "Please tell me how much confidence or trust you personally have in each (of the following) group(s) to protect Canadian culture and identity on television:" The results were as follows:

- CBC 76%
- TVA (French respondents only) 66%
- CTV (English only) 62%
- TQS (French only) 57%
- Specialty channels 54%
- Global TV 53%
- The CRTC 48%
- Consumer groups 43%
- The federal government 40%
- Your provincial government 40%
- Cable television companies 30%

- Telephone companies 29%
- Satellite companies 23%

When Ipsos-Reid read a series of statements to survey respondents, here is the percentage of respondents who strongly or somewhat agreed with the following:

- I want to see the CBC survive and prosper – 94%
- The CBC is one of the things that helps distinguish Canada from the United States – 89%
- The CBC provides value for taxpayers' money – 77%

Regarding funding, the survey asked the following question: "Assume for a moment that your federal Member of Parliament asked for your advice on an upcoming vote in the House of Commons on what to do about CBC funding. Which of the following three options would you advise him or her to vote for ... decrease funding for the CBC from current levels ... maintain funding for the CBC at current levels or increase funding for the CBC from current levels?" The responses were as follows:

- Decrease... 9%
- Maintain... 51%
- Increase... 38%

The Ipsos-Reid poll also asked Canadians "how important is it that programming made in and about your part of the country be produced?" Seventy-eight percent of respondents replied that it was "important" or "very important". The poll also found that 85% of Canadians wanted "to see CBC strengthened *in my part of Canada*" and 80% agreed with the statement: "we should build a new CBC capable of providing high quality Canadian programming *with strong regional content* throughout Canada".

These findings point to a number of key issues, indeed paradoxes, about the CBC's dilemma. First, support for the CBC and the sense of its importance among Canadians clearly surpasses by far what could be deduced from a superficial consideration of audience statistics. Second, Canadians feel a need for public broadcasting at a local and regional level that they would like to see CBC fulfill. The Lincoln committee intuitively interpreted this feeling as reflecting that in many parts of Canada, the CBC "has the capacity to be one of the essential building blocks of community life". The Friends, whose paid membership reaches into 60,000 Canadian homes, concluded that "The CBC could be mandated to play a far stronger role in citizen engagement and life-long learning, both Canada-wide and in major communities across the land."

Despite the strong attachments that many Canadians have to the CBC, the corporation remains vulnerable. During the lead up to the June 2004 federal election, Conservative opposition leader Stephen Harper suggested that the

CBC's main TV networks and its two radio channels devoted to classical music be commercialised. He argued that the CBC should only operate in areas where the private broadcasters were not doing the job. Another prominent Conservative politician, Tony Clement, also questioned whether the CBC should exist in its current form. Clement was quoted as saying: "Do we need the CBC in its current format, when there are so many private broadcasting channels available? When's the last time we truly looked at the CBC and its mandate and the role of the taxpayer in funding that. I think we have to do something different." (Friesen, 2004)

As we have shown, part of the problem is that the CBC now finds itself in a vicious circle. Without the resources required to meet its mandate and deliver distinctive quality programming, the case for privatising or dismantling the CBC becomes more obvious and inviting. Having largely retreated from big budget dramatic productions, and indeed from lucrative local markets, large segments of the audience have disappeared. What keeps CBC television afloat in English-speaking Canada, at least, are its broadcasts of NHL hockey, the Olympics and a mix of mini-series, TV movies and specials into which the corporation throws much of its resources. Even its marquee national news programs have slipped dramatically in popularity.

The question perhaps is whether a kind of tipping point has been reached where the corporation has been weakened to the point where its very weakness becomes an argument for shutting it down or privatising it. The Canadian public would clearly like to see more Canadian programming and a stronger and more resilient CBC especially at the local level. But political will is another matter.

The Lincoln Report and the CBC

In June 2003, the parliamentary committee's broadcasting study⁸ reported that "the CBC continues to represent an important public policy instrument that not only nurtures, but helps to promote Canada's vibrant and diverse cultures." It concluded that "the time has come – and that it is entirely possible – for Canada's national public broadcaster to be re-invigorated with a new mandate – one that would meet with general acceptance from Canadians." The Committee made a series of precise recommendations designed to address some of the dilemmas the CBC has faced over the past dozen years or so. As required by law, the Government responded to the parliamentary committee report⁹, reaffirming "that the CBC is a unique and essential instrument in the Canadian broadcasting and cultural landscape". In line with the committee report, the Government further stated "that it is particularly important that the CBC better communicate its plans and priorities, and that its accountability for results to Canadians be improved."

The Lincoln Report attempted to redress each of the CBC's many problems in a systematic way. It recommended multi-year funding, proposed

mechanisms to ensure that the board would not become a political instrument and encouraged the government to find more space for the CBC in the cable and digital worlds. But the parliamentary report also sought to recast the public broadcaster by suggesting new ways in which the corporation might see its role. At the heart of its proposals was the proposition that the CBC had to find a means to re-enter local broadcasting. The parliamentarians believed that a strong national network could not be sustained without strong local roots. In recommending the creation of a Local Broadcasting Initiative Program (a fund that would bring together private, community and governmental partners) the committee was offering the CBC a way to re-build its local and regional presence and stature. While the LBIP would be open to all broadcasters, the CBC would clearly be a beneficiary.

It may also be time to see the public broadcaster take on an asymmetrical shape and responsibilities. The CBC does not have to have the same shape or offer the same programming everywhere in the country. There may not be a need for the CBC to maintain a local news hour in large cities where there are 4 or 5 private broadcasters that have long since filled that need. This may not be the case, however, in smaller centres or in provinces where private broadcasters have less of a presence.

The Lincoln Committee tried to set a course for re-visioning the CBC by recommending increased and stable long-term funding – in exchange for which the public broadcaster would have to submit a detailed strategic plan outlining how it proposed to fulfil its mandate with respect to local and regional broadcasting, Canadian programming, and new media initiatives.¹⁰

As this book went to press, these proposals have not been acted upon – although the government has issued two official responses to the Lincoln Report (Canada, Department of Canadian Heritage 2003 and 2005). It remains to be seen whether Canada's political leaders and the public broadcaster itself have the vision and imagination that are needed to strengthen and perhaps even reinvent public broadcasting in the 21st century.

Lessons for other public broadcasters

European advocates of public broadcasting might see the Canadian case as a dark foreboding of what might happen in their own countries. Indeed all of the factors that weakened the CBC are present in Europe. The hyper-fragmentation of audiences brought by the explosion of cable and digital channels can be delayed but not avoided. The emergence of large corporate behemoths that enjoy the benefits of cross-media ownership and can tower over public broadcasters, while limited by what they can own in some countries, is likely to continue. Most critically perhaps, Canada made tough decisions in the 1990s to eliminate deficits and pay down debt that many European countries have yet to make. While some public broadcasters in Europe

are shielded from government budget cuts by the existence of licence fees, others are not. Even in systems where a licence fee is in place, broadcasters that wish to raise the levy need permission from governments. And the shrinking of a local presence that has arguably been the most devastating effect of the budget cuts made by the CBC can happen to any broadcaster that forgets that culture has to be nurtured and audiences won at the local level.

Although the Canadian case reflects unique circumstances, not the least of which are the relentless onslaught of signals from American broadcasters that spill across the border and the costs of connecting across such a vast land mass, the weakening of the CBC should cause public broadcasters elsewhere to be concerned. Some lessons are clear.

First, public broadcasters will need to have multiple footholds in the new digital universe. They will have to occupy new spaces and accumulate audiences in more complex ways than in the past. The lessons provided by the CBC in this regard are dramatic. Largely shut out of the burgeoning cable and digital universe, the CBC reaped few rewards even as the TV world expanded. Public broadcasters cannot allow this to happen if they wish to survive, let alone prosper.

Second, public broadcasters have to be protected as much as possible from frustrated and partisan politicians who wish to exert control in one way or another. This is easier said than done. Some public systems have political partisanship and power-sharing arrangements built into their very fabric. Here the Lincoln Report has sober advice that has resonance elsewhere.

Third, the decision, forced on the CBC by its many budget crises, to throw almost all its eggs in one basket by concentrating on national as opposed to regional and local programming, should not be duplicated elsewhere. In smaller countries this distinction may not be as poignant. But in Canada the glaring lesson is that the two levels are inextricably linked. Audience loyalty begins and to some degree ends with local stations, personalities and programming. One has to build from the bottom up as much as from the top down.

We do not wish to suggest that it is time to write the final epitaph for Canadian public broadcasting. New strategies and new infusions of money may turn the situation around, at least to some degree. There is little question, however, that in the new global media environment, public broadcasters like the CBC will remain essential instruments of national cultures, civic engagement and public life. The question is whether governments will recognise that in the new media age public broadcasting is as important for societies as it has ever been – perhaps more so.

Notes

1. Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, *Our Cultural Sovereignty. The Second Century of Canadian Broadcasting*. Ottawa: Communication Canada Publishing, June 2003. The authors of this chapter served as expert advisors to the Committee.
2. For a detailed history of the evolution of Canadian broadcasting and the CBC's role therein, see Raboy, 1990. For the CBC's current mandate, as specified by the Broadcast Act of 1991, see Appendix 1.
3. See Appendix 2. The table shows that Canada ranks just above Portugal and Poland for its spending on national public broadcasting as a percentage of GDP in 1999. Conversely, Finland, Denmark, Norway and the United Kingdom placed in the top four with public funding expenditures that were three to four times greater than what is spent in Canada on the CBC. See also Appendix 3, CBC funding, 1990-2002.
4. The Lincoln Committee listed eight CBC licence applications for new television services that had been denied by the CRTC in the 1990s, and commented: "Given that all of these proposed services suit the mandate of a public broadcaster, the Committee cannot understand why the Corporation was denied these services by the CRTC." (Canada, 2003: 596)
5. This section is based on Taras, 2001.
6. See Appendix 4.
7. Poll conducted between May 4-9, 2004 (Ipsos-Reid 2004).
8. Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, op. cit.
9. Department of Canadian Heritage, "The Government of Canada's Response to the Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, *Our Cultural Sovereignty: The Second Century of Canadian Broadcasting*". Ottawa: Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, November 2003.
10. See Appendix 5.

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Appendix 1. Mandate of the CBC (Canada, Statutes of Canada, 1991)

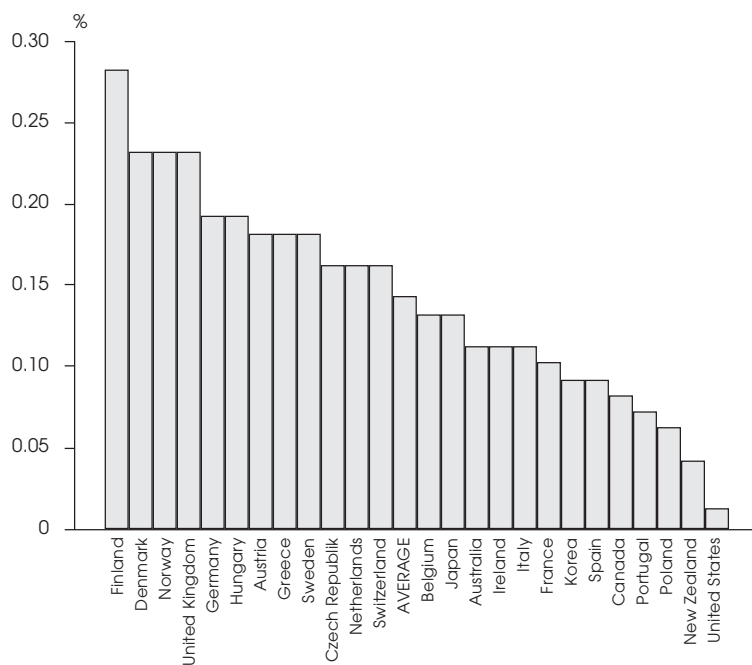
Broadcasting Act

Article 3.1

- (l) the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, as the national public broadcaster, should provide radio and television services incorporating a wide range of programming that informs, enlightens and entertains;
- (m) the programming provided by the Corporation should
 - (i) be predominantly and distinctively Canadian,
 - (ii) reflect Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, while serving the special needs of those regions,
 - (iii) actively contribute to the flow and exchange of cultural expression,
 - (iv) be in English and in French, reflecting the different needs and circumstances of each official language community, including the particular needs and circumstances of English and French linguistic minorities,
 - (v) strive to be of equivalent quality in English and in French,
 - (vi) contribute to shared national consciousness and identity,
 - (vii) be made available throughout Canada by the most appropriate and efficient means and as resources become available for the purpose, and
 - (viii) reflect the multicultural and multiracial nature of Canada;
- (n) where any conflict arises between the objectives of the Corporation set out in paragraphs (l) and (m) and the interests of any other broadcasting undertaking of the Canadian broadcasting system, it shall be resolved in the public interest, and where the public interest would be equally served by resolving the conflict in favour of either, it shall be resolved in favour of the objectives set out in paragraphs (l) and (m)

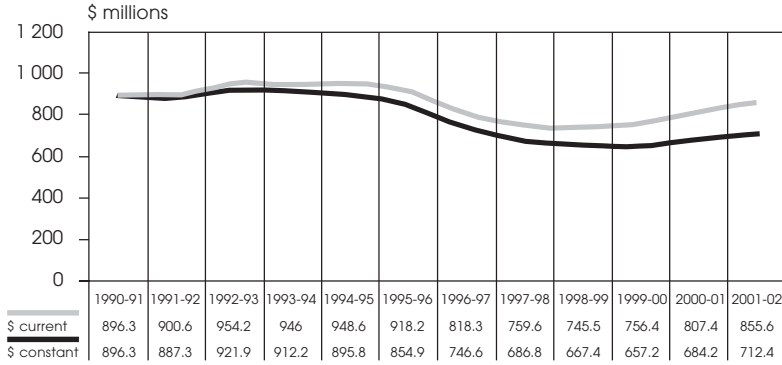
Appendix 2. Public Funding for Public Broadcasters, 1999 (Canada, House of Commons, 2003)

Public Funding for Public Broadcasters in OECD Countries as a % of GDP, 1999



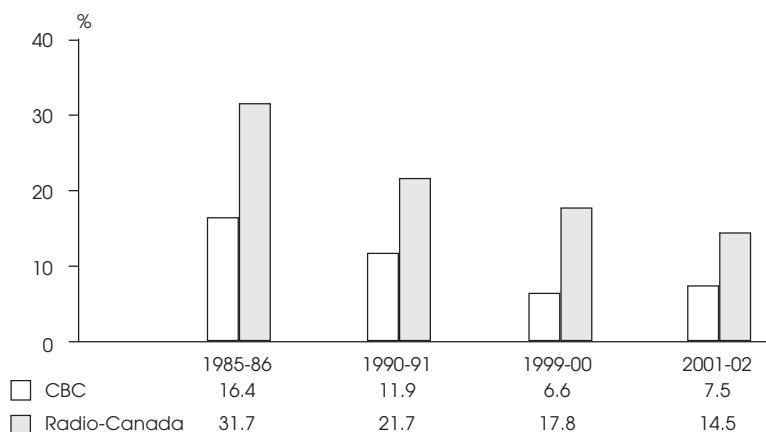
Appendix 3. CBC funding, 1990-2002 (Canada, House of Commons, 2003)

The CBC's Parliamentary Appropriation in Current and Constant Dollars, 1990-2002

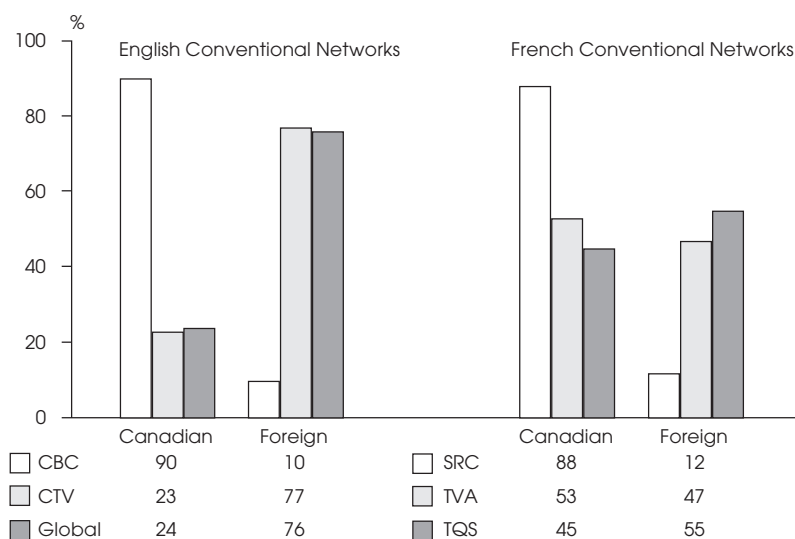


Appendix 4. CBC Audience Statistics; Canadian Content on Canadian Television (Canada, House of Commons, 2003)

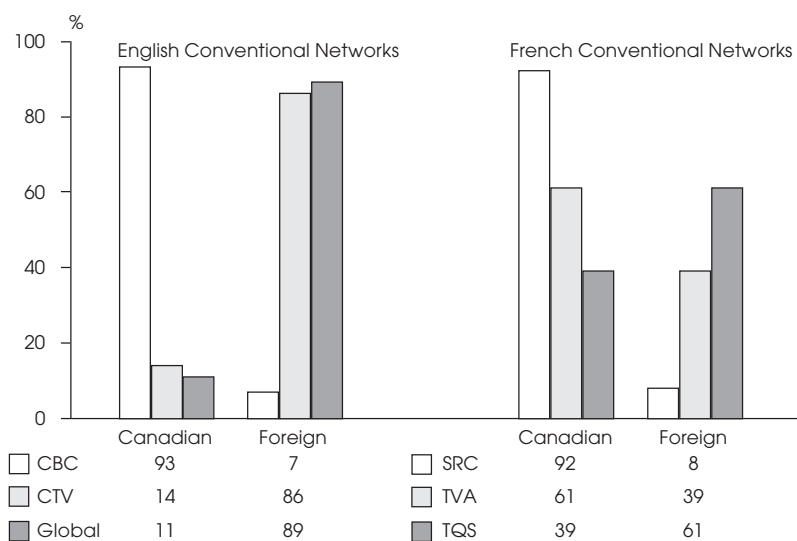
Audience Shares for CBC (anglophone viewers) and Radio Canada (francophone viewers), including Affiliates, Selected Years 1985-2002



Canadian Content Provided during Peak Viewing Hours (7.00 to 11.00 p.m.) by Canada's English and French Conventional Networks, September 2000 to August 2001



Canadian Content Viewed during Peak Viewing Hours (7.00 to 11.00 p.m.)
by Audiences to Canada's English and French Conventional Networks,
September 2000 to August 2001



Spring 2003 Ottawa Prime Time TV Schedules, 7.00 p.m. - 11.00 p.m., February 22-March 15

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday			
 CBOT	7	Royal Canadian Air Force	Life & Times	On the Road Again		Opening Night	Mr. Bean Mr. Bean	NHL Hockey	Wind At My Back	
	8	Anne Murray	This Hour Has 22 Minutes	Last Chapter	Royal Canadian Air Force				Movie	
	9		Disclosure	Fifth Estate	Witness				Da Vinci's Inquest	
	10		The National						An American in Canada	Sunday Report
 CTV	7	Wheel of Fortune			Jeopardy		Mysterious Ways	My Wife & Kids Degrassi		
	8	8 Rules According to Jim	American Idol	My Wife & Kids American Idol	Just For Laughs Scrubs	Fastlane			Sue Thomas F.B. Eye	Alias
	9	Law & Order	American Idol	West Wing	CSI	W-Five			Cold Squad	Law & Order
	10	CSI Miami	Sopranos	Law & Order	CSI Miami	Law & Order			Cold Squad	Boomtown
 (Toronto)	7	Bob & Margaret			Entertainment Tonight	Entertainment Tonight	Bob & Margaret	Deconstructing	The Simpsons	
	8	Boston Public	Let's Make a Deal	70s Show Popstars	Survivor	Dawson's Creek	PSI Factor	State of Heart	The Simpsons	
	9	Raymond Greek Life	Frasier A.U.S.A.	Married by America	Will & Grace Popstars	Hack	Mutant X	Greek Life	Greek Life	
	10	Crossing Jordan	Judging Amy	Glimore Girls	Without a Trace	Blue Murder	Andromeda	Raymond	Degrassi	
 CHRO	7	Millionaire Selfield					The Immortal		Kool Countdown	
	8	Buffy the Vampire	Buffy the Vampire	Monk	Starhunter	Funniest Videos	Cops	America's Most Wanted	Movie	
	9	Birds of Prey	Angel	Twilight Zone	Movie	Twilight Zone				
	10	Tracker	Adventure Inc.	Dead Zone	Movie	Walker	Serve & Protect			
Canadian		Local	Foreign							

Appendix 5. Parliamentary Committee Recommendations Regarding the CBC (Canada, House of Commons, 2003)

Recommendation 6.1:

The Committee recommends that Parliament provide the CBC with increased and stable multi-year funding (3 to 5 years) so that it may adequately fulfill its mandate as expressed in the *Broadcasting Act*.

Recommendation 6.2:

The Committee recommends that for greater clarity the *Broadcasting Act* be amended to recognize the value of new media services as a complementary element of the CBC's overall programming strategy.

Recommendation 6.3:

The Committee recommends that the CBC deliver a strategic plan, with estimated resource requirements, to Parliament within one year of the tabling of this report on how it would fulfill its public service mandate to:

- deliver local and regional programming.
- meet its Canadian programming objectives.
- deliver new media programming initiatives.

Recommendation 6.4:

The Committee recommends that the impacts and outcomes of the CBC's strategic plans (for the delivery of local and regional programming; Canadian programming; and, cross-platform, new media initiatives) be reported on annually and evaluated every two years. These evaluations should meet Government of Canada program evaluation standards.

Recommendation 6.5:

The Committee recommends that the CBC submit a plan to Parliament detailing its needs for the digital transition and that it receive one-time funding to meet these needs.

Recommendation 6.6:

The Committee reaffirms the importance of public broadcasting as an essential instrument for promoting, preserving and sustaining Canadian culture and recommends that the government direct the CRTC to interpret the *Broadcasting Act* accordingly.

Audience Relations in the Changing Culture of Media Use

Why Should I Pay the Licence Fee?

Robert G. Picard

Viewer and listener payments for public service television are made now within a dual system of public service broadcasting [PSB] and commercial broadcasting, and in an environment where audiences are increasingly making payments for a wider array of media and communication products and services. This expanding market-based context for media is changing viewers and listeners into consumers and creating a clear payment-for-services culture that is altering the traditional relationship between public service broadcasters and their audiences. Licence fee payments have traditionally been seen by many as creating a bond between audiences and public service broadcasters. The expansion of direct audience payments for other broadcast services dilutes that bond with PSB organisations by creating bonds with commercial competitors.

The development of pay-for-services culture – currently manifest in payments for cable, satellite, and digital television and radio reception in some nations – will continue to develop as more pay-per-view services are available. It will be strengthened as pay services appear with the introduction of broadband-based television and film programming. This change in the culture of broadcasting use creates a corresponding need for public service broadcasters to alter ways they relate to their audiences and the public generally. Although the need to alter organisational cultures is generally recognised within the public service broadcasting community, the responses of broadcasters have varied markedly.

The change in the culture of television and radio use, and the variety of information and entertainment choices now available, are increasingly empowering viewers and listeners and creating a strong consumer-driven environment for broadcasting. These factors create conditions that can affect the public's perception of licence fees, may provide a more favourable climate for opponents of future fee increases, and may increase the potential for seeing the end of licence fee funding. All of these represent clear threats to public broadcasting. In this environment, public service broadcasters must make continued concerted efforts to foster and solidify relationships with

audiences to ensure the environmental developments do not produce the potential negative outcomes, and to ensure that political support for public service broadcasting and licence fee financing are maintained.

Forms, effects and limits on uses of licence fees

Licence fees represent a form of broadcasting financing in which audiences fund some or all of the service provided. The European Broadcasting Union reports that it is “the traditional means of funding for public service broadcasting, and it is often regarded as the most appropriate source of funding” (EBU, 2000:9). Licence fees were selected as a means of financing public service broadcasting in many nations because broadcasting was not seen as having the same position as other social services and there was strong support for the idea that users should directly fund broadcast services. Concurrently, the potential for broadcasting to be used for manipulation of public opinion was recognized and financing through licence fees was seen in many nations as a means of diminishing the potential for state interference with content if funding came from tax receipts. As a result, licence fees are seen as having three distinct advantages: “First, it assigns the costs for broadcasting directly to its consumers. Second, this tends to create a mutual and reciprocal sense of responsibility between the broadcasters and the audience, which, third, frees the broadcaster from control and influence by governments (as might be the case where direct government support exists) or advertisers (as might be the case in commercial systems)” (Newcomb, 1997:956).

In policy terms, the licence fee was originally conceptualised in most nations as a fee paid for permission to receive broadcasts (EBU, 2000:10). That has changed over time, partly because the right to receive information in the European Convention on Human Rights conflicts with the approach. At the time the BBC broadcasting monopoly was ended, for example, confusion over the nature of the licence fee was clearly evident. One article noted that “nobody is really sure what sort of charge the licence fee represents. Even the Treasury is divided into those who say it is a poll tax and those who say it represents some sort of subscription” (MacCabe & Stewart, 1986:25). This type of confusion led authorities in many nations to reconceptualise the fee as broadcasting policies and laws were revised. Today, licence fees are regarded as a fee to receive public broadcasting or as a special contribution or tax to support public broadcasting (EBU, 2000). Given that household penetration of television and radio exceeds 95 percent in all European nations, it is difficult to classify the payments as anything but a use tax – a concept very close to that of subscription. This has significant implications for how the fee is perceived by viewers and listeners, and for the changing culture of broadcasting use.

There is wide variability in the amount of income that PSBs receive through licence-fee funding. According to McKinsey (1999), it provides more than 95 percent to broadcasters such as BBC (United Kingdom), Sveriges Television (Sweden), and NRK (Norway), but 50 percent or less of total funding for firms such as RTVE (Spain) and RTP (Portugal). Most public service broadcasting organisations rely on mixed funding that blends licence fees, advertising income, with state and other funding. There is increasing pressure to seek new sources of revenue. Choices of funding methods for PSB are influenced by national cultures, political systems, histories, and financial resources. Differences are evident between northern and southern European nations, between nations influenced by Anglo, Germanic, and Latin cultures, among nations with stronger social welfare orientation and others, and among nations in which public service broadcasters existed from the inception of broadcasting compared with those in which it developed out of state broadcasting companies. Differences based on similar characteristics are also evident in public service broadcasters worldwide.

In economic terms a licence fee is an “all-or-nothing” enabling expenditure that allows access to a public good (Fraser, 1996).¹ But paying the fee does not necessarily equate with high usage of the good, especially in the increasingly competitive TV and video marketplace. Licence fees are sunk costs for television viewers – as are payments by firms for spectrum licences (Bauer, 2003) – and thus do not have significant impact on viewing decisions.

The licence fee, however, provides financial advantages for public broadcasters. A study noted that the licence fee provides “a steady, dependable, and substantial revenue stream” (McKinsey, 1999:35). This provides predictability of funding that allows investment in programming and operational improvements with reasonable assurance of future income. However, most nations have not indexed fees to inflation, so they tend to produce lower real income over time and do not keep pace with rising operating costs (O’Hagan & Jennings, 2003).

The existence of a licence fee does not in itself guarantee payment of the fee by viewers. In Italy, for example, the fee – which is the lowest in Europe – consistently lags behind increases in inflation and the non-payment rate is 21 percent, the highest in Europe (Hibbard, 2004). On the other end of the spectrum, payment compliance is about 95% in the Nordic nations but still falls short of universal payment. In general, licence payment compliance rates are reasonably stable in most nations. The expected and received incomes do not vary widely year to year because evasion rates tend to be stable and are usually included in financial projections.

Viewer payments for broadcast service have desirable effects as well. Payments for broadcast programmes have been shown to generally increase the diversity of programmes available to viewers. Programme diversity tends to be maximized by subscription rather than by advertising-supported TV (Doyle, 1998). Viewers are willing to pay for services that provide programming not available on free-to-air channels (Herrero, 2004). Licence fees for

public service broadcasting tend to produce similar results as subscriptions for pay television. Such fees free the channels from having to serve the largest possible audiences at the behest of advertisers and instead permit them to provide some service to smaller audiences or to serve cultural and social interests that do not attract commercial broadcasters. Thus, the licence fee was, in the past, seen as a form of subscription that promotes programme diversity, supports national culture and identity, and can create a public commons in which citizens congregate and share experience.

It has been recognised, however, that licence fees themselves do not guarantee the widest service of public needs because they tend to support only a limited number of channels. This has led European and other nations to introduce commercial broadcasting as a means of providing additional service. The result has been increasing diversity of programming and greater service to niche audiences. There are limits to the improvements. At some point more channels are available than the market can support, creating "ruinous competition" that harms diversity and reduces the overall quality of programming available (Van Cuilenberg, 1999; Van der Wurff, Van Cuilenberg & Keune, 2000; Picard, 2001).

Commercial broadcasting owners generally oppose the licence fees that support public broadcasting because the fees provide a base of support that creates competitive advantage in financial resources. In the 1990s licence fees were challenged by competition authorities in the European Commission. Ultimately, the will of national governments and the European Parliament to continue such funding resulted in the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) protocol that protected licence fees and general state funding for public service broadcasting.

A subsequent communication on state aid and public broadcasting (European Commission, 2001) recognized broad legitimate remits for public service broadcasters and protection for their financing, but also acknowledged that state support through licence fees and other funding is a form of generally prohibited state aid. The communication permits aid to public service broadcasting if it serves a clearly defined general interest, if there is a clear and specific entrustment (remit) to provide the service, and if its effects are limited to serving those interests. Thus, broadcasting that serves cultural, social, and political needs such as supporting understanding, identity, community, and democratic processes is protected. The communication, however, makes it clear that any aid that skews competition in other activities is not protected from competition law and regulation. Thus, public service broadcasters are subject to competition law enforcement when cultural, social and political interests are less clear and the activities are more commercial. This is particularly important because most PSBs are expanding their activities beyond broadcasting and increasingly engaging in activities within fields designed to create new revenue streams. The legitimacy of these expanded activities depends upon their purposes, how they are financed, and their effects on competitors that provide similar services.

Issues of who controls the licence fees, their collection, equity in collection, and the costs of collection help define the position of licence fees in society and their relationship to public broadcasting. Licence fees are authorised and their prices set by parliaments or a regulatory body. These are typically collected by a government agency or government-authorised agency. In some nations the fees are collected more indirectly with levies added to electrical bills, for example. It is now exceedingly rare for collection efforts to be directly associated with, or to specifically state a clear relationship with, public service broadcasters. The reason for this is unclear but may result from broadcasters not wanting to be sullied by an association with money, by using authority to demand payment, or by other factors.

In contexts where the licence fee is regarded as a nearly universal tax or a tax to support broadcasting, it is easier to view it as just another tax and to alter its collection method. Some nations – most recently the Netherlands (Daalmeijer, 2004) – have replaced the licence fee with funding from general taxation. The fact that costs for collection of licence fees in Europe range from 2 to 15 percent (O'Hagan & Jennings, 2003) has led some to argue that its inclusion in general tax collections produces efficiencies, although evidence of savings is unclear.

The changing view of licence fee funding, issues of efficiencies, the provision of money making services by public service broadcasters, and concerns over advantages licence fees provide *vis-à-vis* commercial broadcasters are leading some countries to consider different sources of income. France, for example, recently considered ending the licence fee and replacing it with income from lottery ticket sales (France May Scrap, 2000). The Conservative Party in the United Kingdom is considering the idea of proposing replacement of the licence by subscription income, advertising, and direct state support (Reid, 2003). The Labour Party and BBC management now consider it possible that the licence fee will end at some point in the future.

Changing from a licence fee to general tax funding, however, repositions public service broadcasting as just one of an array of social welfare services provided in the state and removes the ear-marking of the funds for broadcasting that exist with the licence fee. The move to general tax funding, which is supported by arguments of collection efficiency and the role of public service broadcasting as a publicly funded cultural institution, puts public service broadcasting in the position of being one of many cultural institutions seeking state funds, such as symphonies, opera companies, and museums. In such an environment, public service broadcasters must compete for resources by emphasizing their service to contemporary cultural and political needs, to more frequent and broader use among the public than other cultural institutions, and to their easier accessibility by the public. They also need excellent relations with taxpayers because increased political support is necessary as they compete for funds with other worthy cultural and social institutions.

Licence fees and relations with viewers and listeners

Among most media, the view of audiences as consumers has been gaining strength in the past two decades. The impact of this approach on broadcasting policy was noted as early as the 1980s (*Television in Great Britain*, 1987). Increases in commercial free-to-air channels, basic cable and satellite channels, and also premium channels over the years, have greatly reduced the direct linkage between licence fees and TV viewing or radio listening.

The increasing number of channels, both domestic and international, provides expanding choices for viewers that are breaking down monopolistic advantages previously held by public service broadcasters. Because audience demand for television and radio programming has not increased proportionally with channel and program expansion, there is an oversupply of programming that fragments the audience (Picard, 2001). As audiences devote more of their time to other channels there are reductions in the amount of contact and the significance of public service broadcasters to their media use. The majority of public service television broadcasters across Europe lost average daily audience share during the 1990s, and that trend is continuing. The average daily audience market share for public service broadcasting in Austria dropped from 63.4% to 51.4% between 1995 and 2003, for example, and Portuguese PSB viewing dropped from 44.8% to 28.8% in the same period (European Audiovisual Observatory, 2004). Viewing of public service broadcasters in nations with fewer competing commercial broadcasters tended to be affected less significantly (Danish and Norwegian PSB, for example, have managed to maintain average audience of 70% and 43% respectively).

Any loss of regular audience contact creates a growing separation of audiences and public service broadcasters. The general decline in use of public service broadcasting is compounded by an equally significant movement away from PSB among younger audiences that are disengaged from community life or prefer the escapist, entertainment-oriented offerings of commercial broadcasters. These factors – combined with growing use of other types of media – are creating a media use culture based on highly individualised preferences and choices. The result of contemporary media trends is that public service broadcasters across Europe today account for an average of less than 40 percent of television viewing, although they have tended to maintain market dominance (Picard, 2003). Average daily viewing of public service broadcasters in the European Union ranges from a low of 14.2% in Greece to 70% in Denmark, but viewing surpasses the 50% level only in Austria, Denmark, and Poland (European Audiovisual Observatory, 2004). Clearly, the new environment and culture of media use has significant implications for issues of identity, community knowledge and involvement, national culture, and democratic processes.

Licence fees are a particularly important element in this environment because they can be seen either as evidence of a special relationship between broadcasters and audiences or as an objectionable, undesirable, and coer-

cive transfer of wealth from unwilling citizens. Both perspectives are salient to social and economic debates over future funding of public service broadcasting.

From the positive perspective, the relationship between public service broadcasting and the licence fee is not merely a financing arrangement, but rather a linking mechanism between the organisations and their audiences. Research has shown that payments between parties are a central aspect of transactional relationships and are one of the factors that bind people and organisations/companies together. A variety of psychological, relational, and exchange bonds link customers and companies, affecting the type and strengths of their relationships. These are relevant to the relationships between PSBs and their audiences. These bonds include social, economic, technical, knowledge-based, and legal bonds (Wilson & Mummalaeni, 1988; Cannon & Perreault Jr., 1999; Perry, Cavaye & Coote, 2002; Lin, Weng & Hsieh, 2003). In the end, commonality of interests, mutual benefit, trust, and respect are at the heart of the strongest bonds and the relationships they create.

The links between licence fees and audience have been recognised for a number of years. Licence fees supporting public broadcasting are often described as producing desirable bonds. It has been argued, for example, that “in licence-fee systems...audiences often have a much greater sense of involvement in the performance of the broadcaster or broadcasters” (Vipond, 1995:286). The EBU argues that “the fact that the fees are paid by viewers and listeners reinforces the link between the public broadcasting organization and the public for which it exists....Broadcasting journalists and managers are continually made aware of whom the programming is made for, and who ultimately has to be satisfied. And viewers and listeners know what they are paying for, they can assess its value, and they can express their legitimate expectations” (EBU, 2000: 5).

There is evidence that political debates over licence fee levels and alternative funding can harm the relationship between public service broadcasters and audiences because of arguments that audiences are paying for services they do not use or want are resonating among significant portions of the public. Strong political divisions over the licence fee in Canada, for example, “did not bring the public broadcasting and the public closer together but rather deepened their suspicion of one another” (Vipond, 1995:299). This ultimately led to the decision to abandon licence fees and rely upon tax-based funding.

The separation of licence collection from public service broadcasting companies interferes with the presumed effects of the linkage. In fact, many public service broadcasters pretend not to be related to fee collection, presenting it as a legal requirement that is separate from the PSB organisation. There is a certain irony in this position because they actively support the licence system and regularly lobby for increases in the fee.

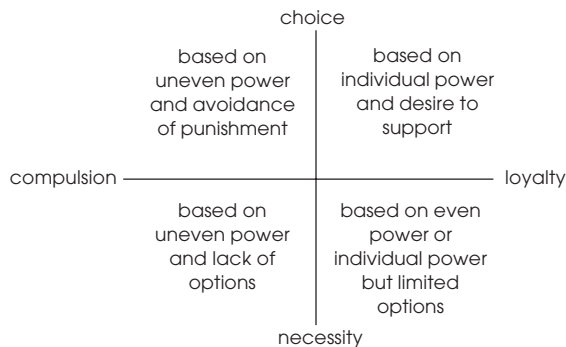
Despite the highly positive view of these linkages by public service broadcasters, it needs to be recognised that audiences' views of the closeness of

their relationship with the broadcasting organisation are not necessarily similar. It has been shown, for example, that public involvement in decision making is limited and made primarily through elite representation in public hearings (Finn, McFadyen & Hoskins, 2003). Most participation by the audience is limited to anonymous preference and performance surveys. The effect of any bond created there can be expected to be relatively weak.

Mere payment of licence fees does not create psychological ties or a close relationship. Viewers typically pay 2 to 4 times as much for cable and satellite services than they pay for licence fees. Subscriptions to pay television channels, magazines, and other media provide a clear link in which it is in the interests of the provider to meet the needs of the audience in order to maintain the economic relationship. This relationship is far more abstract in the case of licence funded public service broadcasting because it is based on a variety of factors including audience perceptions of value for money spent, audience faith and trust in the values and decision making processes of the management, and audiences belief that it supports greater social and cultural functions in society. If PSB audiences' satisfaction with and commitment to these factors is insufficient, support for licence-based funding flounders.

There are two primary elements that characterise and determine the strengths of various bonds and relationships among transactional partners. The first element involves whether they are based on necessity or choice. The second depends on whether they are based on compulsion or loyalty. Obviously relationships based on choice and loyalty will be stronger, more beneficial for both parties, and last longer than those based on necessity and compulsion. If one constructs these relationships as an explanatory matrix (Figure 1), the factors underlying types of relationships and power distribution relationships become clear.

Figure 1. Relationship Matrix

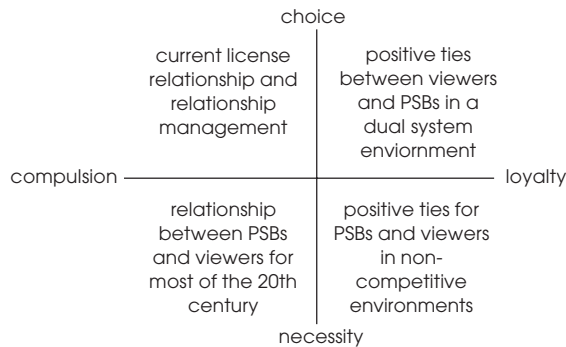


The lower quadrants represent relationships based on necessity due to lack of options in products and services, whereas the upper quadrants represent

relationships in which the consumer has choices. The left quadrants represent situations in which consumers' choices are affected by compulsive forces and the right quadrant represents relationships based on consumer loyalty. The combination of these elements produces different bases upon which transactional relationships take place. The elements in Figure 1 have significant implications for licence funding of PSBs because transactional relationships based on compulsion tend to lead to resentment and opposition while relationships based on loyalty tend to benefit all parties.

If one applies the concepts in the relationship matrix to the relationships between public service broadcasters and their audiences, one gains significant understanding of the impact of the factors on the relationship (Figure 2). For most of their history, public service broadcasters have been positioned in the lower two quadrants because of the tendency toward broadcast monopolies. At various times the relationships of specific broadcasters have been in the left or right quadrants.

Figure 2. Licence Fees Linkages in the Relationship Matrix



The lower left quadrant represents relationships based on lack of channel choice; the driver for paying the licence fee is avoiding penalties for not paying the fee. Viewers or listeners have no choices among programme providers and must purchase a licence or face punishment. This situation cannot produce a close bond between the parties.

The lower right quadrant represents a relationship in which there are no other channel choices, but a major driver of the transaction is the loyalty of the audience. The audience is willing to pay the fee because they have a loyalty bond with the PSB, because they recognize its importance, and because they appreciate benefits they receive. This does not necessarily mean that compulsion to pay the licence fee is absent, but that conditions in the relationship are such that audiences and broadcasters have a trusting relationship in which audiences pay the licence fee more out of satisfaction and loyalty than compulsion.

Although relations between PSBs and audiences existed in the lower quadrants in the past, changes in technology, policy, and the market in recent decades have given audiences a broad variety of channel and programme choices such that the relationship between public service broadcasters and the audience has moved to the upper quadrants.

If the primary motivator to pay the licence fee is compulsion, the relationship will be located in the upper left quadrant. The coercive nature of this relationship can be illustrated by the current advertising campaign of the UK licensing authority (www.tvlicensing.co.uk). The compliance campaign uses messages such as “TV licence or a court appearance? It’s Up to You”, “A TV licence or a £1,000 fine. It’s Up to You”, and “Get one. Or Get Done.” The campaign is not an idle threat: Non-payment of licence fees is the crime for which 14 percent of incarcerated women in the United Kingdom are imprisoned (Jailbirds, 1995). This campaign and penalty emphasises a required and penalty avoidance relationship and can hardly support the idealised view of the relationship between licence fees and broadcasters asserted by many public service broadcasting executives and proponents.

If the motivator is loyalty, the relationship between audience and broadcaster will be located in the upper right quadrant. Public service broadcasting in the United States, for example, relies upon the loyalty and support of its audience to voluntarily provide funding and to promote additional funding through foundations and firms. Public service broadcasters can operate in this quadrant – even through they are funded by licence fees – by creating significant relationship bonds that are separate from licence payment compulsion. Creating an audience relationship of this type should be a primary objective of broadcasting companies.

This relationship model reveals that in a multi-channel world, public service companies need to pay greater attention to relationship management with their audiences, whose members are increasingly conceiving themselves as consumers of media products and services – and expecting to be treated differently than mere audiences. To do so will require that public service broadcasters not only manage their organisations and content, not only monitor developments in political and regulatory policy, and not only manage relations with parliaments and regulatory agencies. In addition, they must develop mechanisms to manage the crucial relationships with audiences and to infuse the importance of the audiences and those relations throughout the broadcasting organisations.

Relationship management

Organisations and companies in competitive markets have discovered that customer relationship management [CRM] provides significant means for developing and improving relationships with their customers. Studies of

relationships between firms and their customers show the importance of creating loyalty (Reichheld, 1996; Griffin, 2002) and of effective use of multiple points of contact to improve relations (Curry, 2000; Schmitt, 2003).

CRM literature shows that relationships cannot be assumed but must be created and nurtured over time, requiring significant attention and effort. The most important contributions of customer relationship management to the firm are its insight generation capability, its ability to help understand product usage behaviour, and its ability to develop information on customer needs and preferences so that better customer segmentation, targeted service, and customer care can be provided. Current audience research and assessment processes in most public service broadcasters provide only limited information and insight because of the methods being used and because their purposes are not to help build and strengthen relationships.

Relationship management is not limited to commercial relationships. Public sector administrators are increasingly recognising the importance of viewing citizens as clients and using relationship management techniques to improve participation and involvement (Vigoda, 2002). Similar techniques are now being used in health care and other social services. Relationship management can be applied by PSBs as a means of strengthening bonds with audiences. Hochheimer (1993) has shown that developing strong, involved audience relationships is critical to the effective operation of community radio stations. Customer relationship management techniques have been suggested as means to improve program and channel loyalty in public television (Kraft & Götz, 2003).

Many CRM processes are possible because customer records provide sources of information that can be used to improve service and customer contacts (Berry, 2000). The techniques are already being used by satellite and cable operators in their relationships with viewers/customers and are enhanced because regular billing, promotional, and customer service contacts exist between the firms and the users of their broadcast services.

Public service broadcasters do not have customer records or as many points of contact from which to develop the audiences' feelings of satisfaction and importance. These are keys to developing and maintaining loyalty. In fact, the separation of the licence fee and its collection from public broadcasters means that most have lost one of the potentially most significant points of contact between broadcaster and viewer. In most countries, bills for the licence fee come from a relatively anonymous licence agency, contain no direct references to public service broadcasting, and carry no messages underscoring what the viewer gets for their payment or promoting upcoming programming on public service channels. The relationships they have with audiences generate all the goodwill one can expect from interaction with nameless, faceless government bureaucrats, i.e. mainly none.

Records of licence fee payments are held by these licence collection agencies and broadcasters typically do not have access to use data mining techniques that can help target promotion and service activities. Cable and sat-

elite companies, however, explicitly use their billing contact points to strengthen their relationships with viewers, to provide information on upcoming programs, to promote additional services, and to provide a customer service centre. In the process they create stronger bonds with their customers.

Another aspect of customer relationship management involves contact management. Many public service operators do not maintain viewer call centres or effective online response centres. Those with organised viewer contact activities tend to use contacts to gather satisfaction data, but most do not make follow-up contacts with those who have been sufficiently motivated to initiate contact – an indication of higher than average relational involvement. There are variations among broadcasters, with some supporting audience ombudsmen and others using various audience panels and community discussion forums to provide audience members a greater voice, but there is room for general improvement in using these methods to actually improve relationships with audiences.

Consumer publications are an excellent method of continuing and developing relationships. When combined with customer data to personalise some content for specific types of customers, this can be powerful in relationship management. Although some PSBs use audience magazines and newsletters to help nurture audience relationships, many have in recent years reduced their frequency or appearance for cost reasons and thus lost ability to target the material to audience segments.

The range of customer relationship management techniques provide many ways for public service broadcasters to enhance their relationships with audiences, to build loyalty in viewing and listening, and to create public support for public service broadcasting that will influence future policy decisions. The extent to which they are adopted in coming years will affect how the relationships between audiences and public service broadcasters develop in the future.

Discussion

In the current multi-channel, commercialised broadcasting environment, it is not enough to assume that audiences are pleased with the current relationship or wise to presume they will continue to support public service broadcasting for eternity. Public service broadcasters are especially vulnerable in the current communications environment that is shifting toward a consumer model in broadcasting and related video services. In this environment the power of channel and programme choice is shifting to audiences, and the power of funding is shifting as well.

A growing pay-for-service culture presents real risks to the licence fee and to the funding base for public service broadcasters. Audiences/consum-

ers can be expected to increasingly ask themselves why they should have to pay a separate licence fee when they are already paying for cable, satellite, and other pay TV services. This attitude can be expected to lend support to arguments that the licence fee should be abolished or become a subscription fee collected as part of bills for cable and other video services. These arguments may become even more compelling for those public service broadcasters that rely heavily on advertising and whose distinction from commercial broadcasting is less evident.

In order to respond to such issues, public service broadcasters will need to make significant efforts to improve, and routine efforts to maintain, their relationships with audiences. The amount of effort that different public service broadcasters will have to put into those activities will differ because relationships and the perceived value of public service broadcasters by audiences vary. But clearly evolution in the broadcasting environment is changing relationships and creating a disconnect with bonds that previously existed.

One reason for the disconnect is the assumption that all viewers should fund all services offered by public service broadcasters, including those they do not use. When service was limited to a few channels, this gulf did not exist. The continuing expansion of PSB activities beyond basic services into niche channels and new media services is clearly providing desirable services to smaller portions of the audience, but these are services that a majority of viewers may never use. This problem is significant because viewers are increasingly using tiers of channels through cable and satellite services, allowing them to select and pay for those channels that are most significant to them. These developments do not solidify relations with PSBs and will increasingly separate some viewers from public service broadcasters.

It is easy for supporters of public service broadcasting to argue that citizens pay for many public services they may not use or even support politically – public health care, education, social services, military forces, etc. This argument is problematic in the case of licence fees because they are not general tax revenues and because public funding even for many social services including health care, education, and pensions is declining. Significant portions of those services are being privatised in many nations. Proponents of PSB licence fees will need stronger arguments and must nurture far better relationships with audiences to engender continuing support.

If public service broadcasters are to maintain basic operations and to counteract resistance to paying for niche and specialty services, they must effectively and constantly communicate the importance of the breadth and depth of their services to audiences, and this requires increasing the range of connections with audiences. The techniques of customer relationship management provide tools to facilitate these efforts.

The need to improve relations with audiences is increasing rapidly. A disconnect between audiences and broadcasters is now appearing even in countries whose public service broadcasters have relatively good reputations.

In Canada, for example, a recent study was conducted using contingent valuation methods to determine the value that viewers received from public broadcasting and their perception of its value to others. Half of the respondents reported receiving no value from the CBC and three-fourths said it provided no value to other viewers (Finn, McFadyen & Hoskins, 2003).

In a number of nations oppositional campaigns to the licence fee are emerging, gaining attention, and strengthening. This is occurring in part because of the benefits of the Internet to these activities, partly because of commercial broadcaster support, and partly because the messages against forced payments for unwanted or under-used services resonate. Many campaigns complain that viewers pay twice for public service channels because they must pay the licence fee and a cable, satellite, or digital television service fee. Regardless of the efficacy of their arguments, their messages indicate that some bonds that have connected audiences and PSBs in the past have been loosened or are now absent.

For licence fees and support for public service broadcasting to survive, viewers and listeners must not have to ask the question “why should I pay the licence fee?” If they have to ask, they will not be paying it much longer. The new commercialised world is one in which audiences are consumers, not only viewers or listeners. Public service broadcasters must work to ensure that viewers and listeners know day-by-day, month-by-month, year-by-year what they get for the licence fee, how it serves their interests, and why it is important. They must clearly know why they should pay the fee – but more importantly – they must *want* to pay it.

This type of environment can only be created if significant efforts are made to increase the bonds between viewers and broadcasters by minimizing compulsion in the relationship and seeking a relationship based on loyalty and choice. Relationship management techniques provide methods to increase desirable bonds between audiences and public service broadcasters, and thereby to build support for PSB that is increasingly necessary in the media culture created by mixed broadcasting systems and multichannel environments.

PSBs have typically justified licence fees and promoted increases in the fees in annual reports and filings to oversight committees, commissions, and parliaments. In the previous environment, policy makers and elected representatives were the primary stakeholders whose support had to be nurtured. Today, there is a growing consumer attitude toward media. Power is shifting to consuming audiences. Lobbying activities and materials intended to gain support among officials miss audiences and are not effective mechanisms for maintaining necessary bonds, loyalty, and ultimately public support.

In the contemporary broadcasting world authentic bonds and direct relationships between audiences and broadcasters – not merely lip service to those relationships – must be nurtured and solidified if licence fee funding, and thus the cultural and social roles and functions of public service broadcasting funded thereby, are to be maintained.

Note

1. Fraser argues that broadcasting is an excludable public good because of sanctions against avoidance. Most penalties are not onerous, however, and monitoring consumption and fee compliance is difficult, so the degree of excludability is low.

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Language, Economics, and Policy

Challenges to PSB in North America and the European Union

Kenton T. Wilkinson

A key cultural dilemma facing many broadcasters across the globe is how to deal with language diversity among their audiences. For commercially-supported broadcasters, the profit imperative has led to strategies of breadth, such as internationalization, and depth, like niche narrowcasting, neither of which usually entails multilingualism. For public service broadcasting [PSB] linguistic diversity joins other forces such as shifting political mandates, increased self-sufficiency imperatives, technological changes, and audience re-orientations to convulse PSBs and place them on less stable ground than they enjoyed in the past.

In an effort to elucidate the language difference challenge and reveal its impact in distinct contexts, this chapter compares language-related policy and practice in two relatively prosperous and influential world regions, Europe and North America. The comparison reveals how PSBs confront pressures similar to those of commercial broadcasters as they endeavor to become more self-sustaining and market-competitive. The discussion accentuates the intertwined nature of economic and cultural-linguistic factors in broadcasting which complicate the conceptualization and pursuit of communication in the public interest. Language difference in media holds the potential to create economic inefficiencies, splinter social unity and undermine political stability, all of which threaten the integration objective that public service broadcasting systems pursue. Yet there are downsides to competition, cultural homogeneity, and monolingualism as well. This chapter argues that the benefits of language diversity in broadcasting outweigh the drawbacks.

Due to its close ties with identity and nationalism, language has long been a sensitive policy area for governments, and many nations' regulatory systems distribute language-related rules across several levels of government and policy areas (Spolsky, 2004). In regions other than Western Europe this dispersed treatment of linguistic policy concerns has largely obscured the importance of language difference from the view of policymakers and researchers alike. Such obfuscation is occurring at a defining moment as contemporary developments in cultural identity, trade, technology, and media

growth are rendering transnational processes more complex and linguistic issues more significant. Governments are threatened with diminished sovereignty as these processes coalesce in hastening the erosion of social cohesion in an era when public sectors are already succumbing to privatization pressures and supra-national organizations acquire greater influence over policy matters (Ó Siochrú & Girard, 2002).

Because language is a central component in collective identity, nation-building, and nationalism, language policies are considered vital to a society's cultural sovereignty (Hobsbawm, 1996). Yet countries' use of cultural policy and communication regulations to shield their symbolic environments, cultural industries, and national sovereignty from outside influence is an increasingly difficult enterprise as free trade expands and barriers to imported foreign-language media become more permeable. Neo-liberal economic reform ties national economies closer to the global as new communication technologies carry an expanding array of media content and bring new efficiencies to language translation (O'Hagan & Ashworth, 2002). Not all of the challenges are exogenous, however. Many societies include minority language speakers and/or immigrant groups who challenge majority languages in various arenas, including the media. Taken collectively, these changes render language difference in media a sensitive, sometimes explosive issue in an era when national governments face formidable internal as well as external pressures. If diversity is to be embraced and broadcasting is to promote genuine communication through dialogue and discourse, language difference must be understood and endorsed.

Language and media policy

For centuries, translated texts have circulated societies inciting competition with native-language texts, fueling controversies and affecting the regulation and performance of communication industries (Simon & St.-Pierre, 2000). Language difference concerns compounded with the telegraph's introduction and have grown more complex with the development and diffusion of each successive communication technology. A significant gap separates our ability to produce and disseminate messages from our capacity to translate them efficiently and effectively (Collins, 1998). Some observers identify this language gap as the final barrier to fluid cross-national communication, an argument that Ferguson (1992) identifies as a "myth" of globalization. Because language difference in media is a multi-faceted communication dynamic with the power to unify or fracture populations within and across nations, linguistic diversity needs to be understood within the political, economic and industry structures that condition language use in contemporary media. This chapter argues that commercial and public service broadcasters alike must manage language difference conscientiously, but that PSB has a

particular obligation to treat language equitably and to broadcast content in the languages their audiences speak. We will see that some public broadcasters have fulfilled this responsibility more earnestly than others, and that broadcasters within and across Europe and North America may benefit from one another's experiences.

As Mar-Molinero (2000:83) points out, policies affecting language have emanated from multiple origins; of particular relevance here are those concerning trade, language, culture, and mediated communication. Trade policy has facilitated economic interdependence and stimulated international commerce by diminishing regulatory barriers and improving coordination among those structures which remain (Milner, 2002). A parallel acceleration in communication technology and its application has opened societies to greater influence from exogenous forces in what Rodrik (1994) calls a "rush to free trade." Such economic integration has created new cultural tensions, and/or exacerbated existing ones, as distinctive forms of political, economic, and social organization collide. As a key cultural marker, language has been contested in sensitive sectors such as education, law, and mass communication. The 1993 GATT negotiations stalled, in part, over media imports to Europe; protecting linguistic sovereignty in the non-English-speaking European nations was among the concerns (Verón, 1999; De Witte, 2001). Similar rifts will likely appear throughout the 21st century as free trade and new technology thrust together systems of cultural practice and representation grounded in different languages.

Governments employ cultural policies to promote and protect artistic expression in their societies. As more sites and forms of artistic expression come under private influence (Schiller, 1989), balancing the imperatives of artistic expression and profit generation becomes a central underlying tension for cultural policy. Crane (2002:13) identifies three common goals of cultural policy: protecting a country's culture from outside domination; creating and maintaining international images of a country; and developing and protecting international markets for cultural exports. It should be noted that these goals are closely akin to media policy objectives, and that language holds considerable sway in the protection and projection functions that Crane points out. Thus, linguistic minorities target cultural policy in advocating for greater access to resources and broader dissemination of media content in their languages (Hourigan, 2003). Adequate representation of minority language groups poses a challenge to PSBs, especially in contexts where minority and/or separatist groups seek political as well as linguistic autonomy.

Historically, language policy sought to consolidate use of a national language and shield it from external influences. These goals were central to the nation-building efforts of many Western societies in the 18th and 19th centuries, and to newly independent states from the middle of the 20th century (Hobsbawm, 1992). The integration of linguistic minorities into mainstream society through political and economic participation, education, and various social institutions remains a key concern of language policy, yet

increased emphasis on linguistic rights since the Second World War has both shifted the focus and increased the volatility of language policy. While communication systems grow in scope and influence, linguistic integration concerns overlap with communication and cultural policy as nations endeavor to manage language use in media.¹ This carries internal implications for the inclusion and representation of minority language speakers in national discourses and cultural production (Hourigan, 2003), as well as external consequences for national industries' competitiveness in export markets and controlling the importation of foreign-language media (Collins, 1994). Language in media provokes spirited struggles over the inclusion or separation of sub-groups within societies, and is contested space for the projection or protection of culture in external media relations.

Language difference in media

Researchers have made compelling arguments that language use shapes power relations in the political/ideological realm (Fishman, 1972; Phillipson, 1992), the economic arena (Lamberton, 2002) and cultural relations (Hoffman, 1996). In media, language touches all three areas of power relations and may be manifest at the sub-national level (Hourigan, 2003), the national level (Burgelman & Pauwels, 1992) or the transnational level (Maurais & Morris, 2003). Public service broadcasters based in culturally and linguistically homogeneous nations confront relatively light demands in defining and serving the cultural-linguistic needs and interests of their audiences. Yet demographic shifts of the past several decades have reduced the number of such societies. PSBs across the globe endeavor to serve diversifying populations while they face a variety of increasingly pointed political, economic and technological pressures (Atkinson & Raboy, 1997; McCauley et al., 2003). Most existing research on cultural-linguistic diversity and market economics focuses on the commercial sector, but is instructive for PSB.

Pool (1977) was among the first scholars to explore how cultural and linguistic elements affect audience preferences for cultural products, and thereby the configuration of transnational media markets. He argued that cultural markers in media texts such as food, clothing, customs and language combine to create complex webs of audience preferences which media producers endeavor to understand and accommodate. Straubhaar (1991) advanced this notion in emphasizing "cultural proximity" which shapes local demand for local as well as imported media. He maintained that audience preferences are influenced not only by a text's cultural fit, but also by reception processes wherein socio-economic status is persuasive. This factor can weigh heavily where linguistic minorities are mostly of lower socio-economic status than their majority-language counterparts. In a later study Straubhaar (2000) stated, "cultural proximity is based to large degree in language" (p.

202), and “language is a critical element of cultural capital” (p. 206). We may conclude that the tension between economic forces of homogenization and cultural-linguistic tendencies toward heterogeneity (Collins, 1994) lie at the heart of PSBs’ efforts to meet the needs and interests of their audiences on the one hand, and the struggle to thrive as engaged, relevant social institutions on the other.

Several important contributions to our understanding of language difference in media have their origins in economics research. Wildman and Siwek (1988) saw Hollywood’s preeminence in international television deriving from a competitive advantage gained through direct access to lucrative English-language markets, as well as ample financial resources.² Hoskins and Mirus (1988) emphasized the historic audience maximization efforts of U.S. producers that lead to lower “cultural discounts” against U.S. media products than those originating elsewhere.³ The diminished appeal to audiences of exogenous cultural products limits their market value, and leads distributors to reduce prices in order to compete more effectively with local and regional productions. Although U.S. companies have long pursued this market strategy, English-language advantage has its limits, as “accents or idioms may still cause problems” (Hoskins, McFadyen & Finn 1997:32). Collins (1994:386) identified culture and language as resilient “differentiating factors” in media markets at a time when cultural-linguistic communities transgress national boundaries through processes of globalization. He underscores the English advantage argument in maintaining that many importers prefer Anglophone media to other languages because of their familiarity to audiences and “translatability.”

Economic concerns about the competitive advantages accruing to English-language producers are part of a broader apprehension about the expansion of English as the principal language of transnational commerce. A parallel concern exists in the cultural sphere as peoples’ exposure to English spreads through Hollywood and other American media exports. English also gains authority when used as a bridge to connect other-language speakers, or as a node for translating media texts between smaller languages.⁴ Phillipson (2003) argued that Europe’s diversity and character come under threat as English moves toward *lingua franca* status as a widely-spoken second language. He is concerned that such linguistic dependency (he earlier used the term “linguistic imperialism” [1992]) diminishes European sovereignty in the face of American influence in political, economic, cultural and educational arenas.

Huntington (1996) challenged the notion of a hegemonic global culture expressed in English by pointing to the three-decade *decline* in the proportion of the world’s population who speak English (French, German, Russian and Japanese also diminished). He argued that English’s status as a language of wider communication *promotes* intercultural communication by acting as a *lingua franca* that transcends linguistic and cultural differences rather than erasing them (1996:61). Yet Huntington largely sidesteps the problem of

balancing language and cultural cohesion with economic vitality, a tension, we have seen, that is central to broadcasters' fulfilling their public service mandate while surviving in rapidly-changing markets. Many public service broadcasters confront growing pressure as they strive to meet the needs and interests of diverse audiences while simultaneously promoting national social cohesion and seeking economic efficiencies in increasingly competitive environments. Language difference compounds the burden due to its heterogeneity and propinquity with identity. Language is a powerful medium for communicating with various publics on their own terms, and for encouraging mutual appreciation among dissimilar people. When the strength of language is coupled with that of broadcasting, the potential for positive social influence redoubles. We should bear this potential in mind as we turn our attention to two world regions that have managed such power quite differently.

Public broadcasting, language and media integration in Europe

Broadcasting in the public interest has been a core element of European media for decades, and Europe's PSBs have served as models for public broadcasting in other areas of the world. As this historically fragmented region accelerates its efforts toward political and economic integration, PSBs acquire renewed significance as institutions that can fortify member nations' cultural and linguistic distinctiveness even as they join together through the European Union. Thus, PSBs are enmeshed in the tension between forces of integration and fragmentation that EU member states are struggling with. The policies addressing this tension, and public reactions thereto, are being followed with keen interest by observers around the world.

The European Economic Community [EC] strives to integrate nations of the continent through a common market for goods, capital, and services, as well as easing restrictions on the cross-border movement of people. It also has recognized complexities in the exchange of cultural goods. As De Witte (2001:249) explained:

...it gradually became clear, mainly through the case law of the European Court of Justice, that there was no neat separation between economy and culture, and that the economic-sounding concepts used in the EC Treaty could affect cultural goods and activities in so far as these had an economic dimension, which they frequently have.

This dynamic echoes the research literature discussed above and is manifest in contrary policy objectives of encouraging market integration through free trade on the one hand, and of respecting and promoting cultural diversity on the other. The tension between these objectives is reflected in PSBs' current

upheaval as they are expected to be economically self-sufficient while fulfilling cultural mandates.

On May 1, 2004 the number of member states in the European Union grew to 25 from 15, and the number of official languages to 20 from 11. Thus the EU nearly doubled the number of languages in which it must conduct business to comply with Regulation No. 1 of 1958 which stipulates that communications be available in the national languages of all member states. Of course recognition does not ensure equal influence. Prior to 2004, the principal languages were English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish. Smaller language groups included Danish, Dutch, Finnish, Greek, Portuguese, and Swedish. The national and worldwide reach of these languages is reported in Table 1. The EU's recent entrants are Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia; their languages' national and international reach is reported in Table 2. The expanded membership deepens the challenge of developing a fluid regional communication market. And we must keep in mind that the use of minority languages *within* nations complicates the effort to support linguistic diversity in political and practical terms (Extra & Gorteri, 2001).

Table 1. Pre-enlargement languages of the European Union

Language	First-language Speakers in Hub Country (in millions, 1997)*	First-Language Speakers Worldwide (in millions, 1999 est.)^	Second-Language Speakers Worldwide (in millions, 1999 est.)^
English	61.6	341	508
Spanish	39.6	322-358	417
German	89.4	100	128
French	63.9	77	51
Portuguese	9.8	176	15
Italian	57.2	62	n/a
Dutch	21.1	20 (1988)	n/a
Greek	10.4	12	n/a
Swedish	9	9	n/a
Danish	5.2	5.3	n/a
Finnish	4.8	6	n/a

* Figures from Fischer Weltalmanach, 1997 reported in Table 15.2 of Ammon (2003: 235).

^ Figures are from Ethnologue <<http://www.ethnologue.com>>. Accessed October 5, 2003

In a study of language barriers in European television, Luyken et al. (1991) identified nine major linguistic regions and 30 smaller languages spoken by one million people or more. Language transfer through dubbing, subtitling and voice-over is at the center of efforts to establish a vigorous intra-regional trade in media. EU enlargement challenges linguistic integration because language transfer has traditionally occurred between English and a target language or between larger European languages. Also, the new member states

tend to speak minor languages and are typically less wealthy, less populous, and less media-productive than their veteran counterparts.

Table 2. New Entrant Languages to the European Union

Language	First-language Speakers in Hub Country (in millions)	First-Language Speakers Worldwide (in millions)
Czech	10.3(1998)	12(1999)
Estonian	0.953(1989)	1.1
Hungarian	10.3(1995)	14.5
Latvian	1.4(1995)	1.5
Lithuanian	3.0(1998)	4.0(1993)
Maltese	.300(1975)	0.33
Polish	36.5(1986)	44.0(1999)
Slovak	5.4(1998)	n/a
Slovenian	1.7(1991)	2.0(1998)

Dates for worldwide figures are the same as hub country unless noted otherwise. Figures are from Ethnologue.com <<http://www.ethnologue.com>>. Accessed May 24, 2004.

A European Council directive of 1989 entitled *Television Without Frontiers* stated the Commission's goal of upholding public interest objectives while developing a more vigorous and inclusive trade in European content.

The Directive aims to ensure the free movement of broadcasting services within the internal market and at the same time to preserve certain public interest objectives, such as cultural diversity, the right of reply, consumer protection and the protection of minors. It is also intended to promote the distribution and production of European audiovisual programmes, for example by ensuring that they are given a majority position in television channels' programme schedules. (<http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/printversion/en/lvb/124101.htm>)

Because PSBs serve *national* public interest objectives, as articulated in the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam Protocol⁵, their efforts are sometimes at odds with the integration goals of the European Union. Yet cross-language services promoting integration at the national level do exist. YLE's operational division, Svenska, serves Swedish-speaking Finns. Although some Svenska content has been exported to Sweden, the principal focus is communicating to Swedish-origin communities within Finland (Moring & Salmi, 1998). According to Henrik Gröhn, Svenska's current financial controller, 12% of YLE's total budget of 400 million Euros in 2004 was dedicated to producing radio, television and new media content for a Swedish-speaking minority of 7% of the total Finnish population.⁶ This is an admirable yet exceptional case; more commonly, less support is dedicated to minority languages.

In its effort to compete against extra-regional media, principally from the U.S., the EC has preferred commercial broadcasting which meets market imperatives more effectively than PSBs. European efforts in free-market broadcasting have met with limited success regionally, as well as through export. Thus, advocating a fluid, participatory regional media trade is different from achieving it, and the interlocked nature of language and economic power presents a considerable obstacle.

Biltreyst (1992) assessed EC efforts to fortify a regional television market through quotas on imported programs and support for European production. He noted disparities among countries falling under the 'linguistic sphere of influence' of one or more major European countries, and those lacking such close linguistic ties. Thus programs produced in France occupied ample airtime in francophone areas of Belgium and Switzerland. In contrast, Denmark, Greece, The Netherlands and Norway broadcast high percentages of locally produced material. Biltreyst is skeptical of EC efforts at market integration due to the resilience of cultural and linguistic barriers. In an analysis of small European states, Burgelman and Pauwels (1992) concurred with Biltreyst's 'linguistic sphere of influence' discrepancy and concluded, "[small states] have too limited a market and too meager financial resources and possibilities of exploitation to be credible and profitable in a unified market" (p. 175). Notwithstanding these discouraging assessments and the challenges of enlargement, the EU persists in its effort at regional media market integration.

The European Commission agency charged with facilitating cross-language, cross-cultural program flows is the Directorate-General for Education and Culture [DGEC]. Its responsibilities include fostering a single European market for broadcasting, supporting national-level media systems, and providing "defence of European cultural interests in the context of the World Trade Organisation."⁷ Thus the DGEC's mandate aligns with the *Television Without Frontiers* directive – it joins sovereign cultural rights and extra-regional exclusion with emphases on internal cooperation and inclusiveness. MEDIA⁸ is a series of programs running from the early 1990s through 2006, and perhaps beyond, to support the DGEC's objectives. The first phase, MEDIA I, was adopted in 1990 with this purpose:

(1) to remove the barriers from national markets and to initiate 'cross-frontier' cooperation in order to promote economies of scale; (2) to give 'priority to small and medium-sized operators'; and (3) to 'maintain proper regard for national differences and cultural identities, avoiding any cultural uniformization and paying particular attention to the needs of small countries and less widely spoken languages' (Commission of the European Communities, quoted in Humphreys, 1996:280).

Part of MEDIA's mandate is to support language transfer and thereby facilitate the regional exchange of film and television. Yet the European culture

ministers were hesitant to finance the pursuit of these goals: the MEDIA 1995 program budget was one-tenth the amount spent on information technology research (Burgelman & Pauwels, 1992:180), and proponents for doubling the program's budget for the second phase mustered only a 55% increase in funding (Humphreys, 1996:296).

The funding disparity underscores member states' confidence in the commercial viability of information technology at a time when the IT market was booming, and may also reveal concerns about the future viability of traditional, nation-based media such as broadcasting. Research on translation technologies suggests, in line with convergence, that distinctions between IT and mass media will continue to diminish as more fluid computer-mediated translation emerges (O'Hagan and Ashworth, 2002). The MEDIA initiative *Broadcasting Across the Barriers of European Languages* [BABEL] supports program dubbing and subtitling with priority given to smaller languages (Burgelman & Pauwels, 1992:178). This is a critical program for the enlargement nations which must learn more about their new partners while projecting their own identities throughout Europe.

Some observers are skeptical of the EC's willingness to 'put its money where its mouth is' by adequately supporting integration of the new entrants' media systems; they point to limited success in integrating minority language content in the regional media flow before enlargement occurred. Thus small, recently-integrated languages such as most of those listed in Table 2 join minority languages of Western Europe and non-European immigrant languages in a third tier⁹ of political, economic and social influence within the EU (Extra & Gorten, 2001). History has shaped important differences between the new entrants and other third-tier occupants, however.

The political history and Eastern-orientation of several 2004 EU entrants complicates their integration. In linguistic terms, 23% of the new member states' populations identify a non-EU language, Russian, as their principal non-native language. According to the EU, English is spoken by 20% and German by 17% of the Eastern European population (Kondrashov, 2004). Furthermore, as recently as 15 years before joining the EU, the broadcasting systems of some countries operated directly in the state's interest rather than the public's. Although many media have democratized, these old structures and practices die hard. Because broadcast systems are subject to various political and economic vulnerabilities as they adjust to their new status as EU member nations, the European Broadcasting Union and entrenched PSBs must proactively ease their integration. Supporting the new entrants could pay long-term dividends in fortifying the position of public service broadcasting in the New Europe, whereas failing to do so could leave them culturally and linguistically isolated.

Public broadcasting, language and media integration in North America

Although significant linguistic diversity exists among the peoples of Canada, Mexico, and the United States, sizable language populations are limited to English, Spanish, and French. Indigenous peoples and members of immigrant communities speak numerous other languages, but their numbers and market influence are relatively minor. A quick overview of language statistics in North America – which do not capture multiple-language speakers – reveals less diversity of major languages than exists in Europe and also underscores concerns about the influence behind U.S. English.

Among a Canadian population of 32.5 million (July 2004 estimate), 59.3% speak English, 23.2% speak French, and 17.5% speak other languages.¹⁰ English and French are official languages in Canada. In Mexico, population 105 million (July 2004 estimate), 88% speak Spanish as a first language, and 8% speak immigrant languages or regional indigenous languages such as Mayan, Nahuatl, and others.¹¹ Among a U.S. population of 295.3 million (January 2005 estimate) 82.1% only speak English, 10.7% speak Spanish, and 7.2% speak other languages.¹² In considering these statistics we should keep in mind the media economists' arguments concerning the competitive advantages accruing to English-language media producers due to the relative wealth of Anglophone markets, the prevalence of English as a widely-spoken non-native language, and the U.S. tradition of producing media with an eye to offshore markets. All are central to concerns over 'Global English' as well as U.S. hegemony within the Anglophone world.

As a collection of economic policies, trade accords, and efforts toward political collaboration, the North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA] has distinct goals compared with the EU, and only a fraction of its bureaucracy. Morris (2003:145) contrasted the EU, an economic agreement that has "gradually expanded over time to include social policy as well as some language issues," with NAFTA, a legal document in which the partners included many economic issues and largely exclude non-economic issues. Thus NAFTA has not developed language diversity policies or media regionalization services. Because a brisk, U.S.-dominated trade in media pre-existed NAFTA, the agreement has had little impact on the broadcasting business status quo beyond a spike of interest in the Mexican market by U.S. and Canadian investors that was quickly tempered by the peso devaluation of 1994-95. Thus language difference in broadcasting has remained as it was prior to NAFTA's implementation: subject to market forces and the strategic goals of commercial enterprises. Government agencies and supranational organizations have limited involvement, leaving little space for PSB in national or regional broadcasting as the following country reviews illustrate.

The United States possesses the greatest economic strength and political power among the NAFTA nations, and its commercial media influence has concerned both of its neighbors since early in the 20th century. Geographic

proximity has induced U.S. media industries to consider Anglophone Canada an extension of the domestic market, and Mexico as their gateway market to Latin America. Although historic efforts at appealing to diverse domestic audiences lend Hollywood competitive advantages, such appeals have *not* developed in the direction of language diversity in content. U.S. society expects linguistic assimilation of its non-English speaking members, an expectation that extends to audiences for audiovisual media. Only recently have mainstream media companies taken a sustained interest in non-English language media, and then only in cases where their profitability has been firmly established. Investment in Spanish-language media has increased, yet remains well below Latino consumers' buying power even following the so-called "Decade of the Hispanic," the 1980s, and the more recent "Latin Boom" in U.S. popular culture (Dávila, 2001; *Missed Opportunities*, 2002). While there are certainly economic and political efficiencies in leaving language use to market forces favoring English, the U.S. population is diversifying rapidly. Maintaining a monolingual orientation could have negative repercussions in the interconnected world of the future. Public service broadcasting is better positioned than the commercial sector to fill the linguistic void, yet has limited resources and will to do so.

Auferheide (1996:63) offered an insightful distinction: "From its creation, public broadcasting in the United States has been hostage to the marketplace without ever entirely capitulating. It has never aspired to emulate the European public service broadcasting model in which political and civil rather than economic relationships predominate." Neither have the United States' principal PSBs – National Public Radio [NPR] and the Public Broadcasting Service [PBS] – ever enjoyed the audience sizes reached by European PSBs; yet U.S. systems are under similar pressures to become more self-sufficient as government support declines and sources of competition multiply (Noam, 1998). Some observers note that the increased reliance on viewer support is out-of-step with demographic changes in the U.S. population: PBS television and NPR radio become increasingly reliant on contributions from well-to-do Anglo audience members at a time when Anglo population growth is stagnant and the non-Anglo population is booming.¹³

Artz (2003) suggested that a strong class bias is reflected in PBS television programming, resulting in the network's limited appeal to the working class of *any* race, ethnicity or national origin. This may be a manifestation of PBS's attempt to transcend rather than target differences among the U.S. population. It is interesting, and somewhat troubling, to note that language diversification is absent among the calls for change in a volume dedicated to diversifying U.S. public broadcasting to accommodate shifts in demographics and the public interest (McCauley et al., 2003). One might reasonably expect, for example, that more Spanish-language programs would be heard on NPR and seen on PBS given that Latinos surpassed African-Americans as the nation's largest minority in 2003. Yet according to Steve Graziano of Nebraska Educational Telecommunications, "very few public television sta-

tions are making a concerted effort to reach out to non-English-speaking viewers" (Behrens, 2002).

This is not a new problem. In the 1980s it was reported that only 2% of television production allocations by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting [CPB] were funding programs directed specifically at Latino audiences (Treviño, 1983). A related issue concerned the paucity of Latinos employed at CPB and PBS, an impediment to support for Latino writers and producers. Pérez-Luna (1980:35), long ago noted that such slights "contributed to the feeling, among the Latino audience, that public radio and television is an elitist media and has very little to do with them."

Little appeared to have changed by early 2005. Neither the website for the national public television service (www.pbs.org) nor the website of the local affiliate in San Antonio, Texas, a city of approximately 60% Hispanic residents (www.klrn.org), provided a Spanish-language version of their website or easily-accessible information regarding second audio program [SAP] in Spanish for PBS programs. Ironically, a language-relevant series, "Do you speak American?," which aired in January 2005 nationwide on PBS affiliates, did not include Spanish SAP even though a significant amount of the content concerned the 400-year history of Spanish in North America.¹⁴ An organization that prides itself on being socially progressive and attendant to diversity follows the traditional U.S. pattern of expecting linguistic assimilation of its viewers. This is unacceptable not only because it marginalizes Spanish-speaking and bilingual audiences, but also because it reinforces monolingualism on the part of many Americans, a condition that becomes less tenable as the U.S. population diversifies and the country struggles to become more culturally-sensitive as a world leader. Such sensitivity and responsible leadership must start at home.

In Canada, diversity and cultural sovereignty are touchy issues, and the country's linguistic divide has influenced the structure and regulation of communication industries since their origins. Because Canadian media, particularly Anglophone media, have felt constant pressure from the U.S., maintaining broadcasting space for Canadian content has been a long-standing goal. The Broadcasting Act of 1932 mandated bilingual public media, and common radio content was transmitted in English and French. Because the public disliked having programs in two languages share the same channel, by the late 1930s a split system emerged whereby the Canadian Broadcast Corporation [CBC] transmitted in English, and La Société Radio-Canada [SRC] in French (Attallah, 2000). The bifurcation evolved into what A.W. Johnson, President of the CBC (1975-1982), termed "the two solitudes:" there is little consistency in broadcast content (Nesbitt-Larking, 2001) and "the television culture of each language group is a mystery to the other" (Attallah, 2000:182). This language divide in media underscores the dissimilar experiences and orientations of English-dominant and French-dominant Canadians, who are detached in other domains as well. The government's goals for improving cross-cultural communication through public broadcasting are articulated in

Section 3(1) (m) of the Broadcasting Act of 1991 which states that public service programming should:

- (iv) be in English and in French, reflecting the needs and circumstances of each official language community, including the particular needs and circumstances of English and French linguistic minorities
- (v) strive to be of equivalent quality in English and French;
- (vi) contribute to shared national consciousness and identity;
- (vii) be made available throughout Canada by the most appropriate and efficient means as resources become available for the purpose and;
- (viii) reflect the multicultural and multiracial nature of Canada
(cited in Boardman & Vining, 1996:49)

Howell (1982) had earlier pointed out the dichotomy in attempting to forge national unity and express Canadian identity (item vi above) through separate language programming services (item iv above). In fact, language difference in Canada has closer historical association with social division and political separatism than with unity. Anglophone and Francophone media developed distinctively, due in part to U.S. influence. Howell (1982) argued that the lack of a strong international competitor in French-language content has allowed Quebecois media to produce a broader range of locally-relevant programming than its English counterparts. Attallah (2000:180) concurred, stating that "French-language television attracted the best and brightest: authors and playwrights, actors, directors and musicians, intellectuals and politicians" allowing it to "rapidly develop an enduring bond with its audience, which hugely prefers it to all other choices." Such close identification between opinion leaders and audiences is a potent political force, a fact not lost on Canadian prime ministers (Attallah, 2000) who have accused Radio-Canada of hatching French-Canadian plots (John Diefenbaker), using public funds to destroy the country (Pierre Trudeau), and high-handed, elitist treatment (Jean Chrétien). This offers a clear example of how a linguistic minority group may see one phenomenon, the unifying power of language, while others perceive quite another, a threat to national cohesiveness.

Besides strong cultural industries, Francophone Canada has also relied on assertive cultural policy to defend its multiple vulnerabilities as a minority enclave within a mostly Anglophone nation; its proximity to the world's communication superpower; and its involvement in a language market having its own media powerhouse, France. A non-broadcasting example is instructive. In 1985 the Quebec government required that for every English-language film appearing in the province, a French-language dubbed version had to be released within 45 days. This was a boon to the Quebecois dubbing industry not only for the volume of work it produced but also because competitors based in France had difficulty meeting the short turnaround time (Kelly, 1997).

Anglophone Canada is also sensitive to external threats because U.S. communication industries have tended to treat the country as an extension of their domestic market. Linguistic proximity paves the way. Canadian concerns regarding U.S. media imperialism date from the early years of film and radio (Pendakur, 1990) and played a central role in free trade negotiations. Canada claimed an exception of cultural industries from its 1989 Free Trade Agreement [FTA] with the United States. This caused a row between the two countries, but Canada held firm and the U.S. countered by including in the FTA a "notwithstanding" clause that enabled the U.S. to take countermeasures of equivalent commercial effect if Canada restricted trade in the cultural industries (Hoskins, McFadyen & Finn, 1996). Canada's firm stand served to embolden European negotiators who followed suit during the 1993 GATT talks, and the exception was maintained for the NAFTA negotiations in the early 1990s (Verón, 1999). Statistics reported in 1992 reveal the seriousness of this trade issue for Canada: U.S. companies reportedly had captured 93% of Canada's film and video business, 90% of music recording, 92% of book publishing, and were earning around \$350 million annually from television programming (Silverstein, 1992). Shared language as well as some similarities between Anglophone Canada and mainstream U.S. culture facilitates such northward influence.

The final point cited from Canada's Broadcasting Act of 1991, that PSB should reflect the country's multicultural and multiracial nature, underscores how linguistic diversity extends beyond the two major languages. Multiculturalism became a contested political issue in the 1980s and '90s, and Canadian public broadcasting accelerated its efforts to reach isolated communities and provide programming in indigenous languages. The increasing diversity of Canada's urban areas also compels PSBs to reach more audiences through immigrant languages, parallel to the challenge European PSBs face in serving "third tier" audiences. It will be instructive to compare how language-sensitive PSBs respond in these different socio-cultural contexts.

For its part, Mexico has counted on language difference to defend its cultural sovereignty. When negotiating its partnership in NAFTA, Mexico was more conciliatory on cultural issues than Canada had been, partly because of its relatively weak bargaining position. As in Canada, U.S. cultural industries have had a strong historical presence in Mexico. Following the 1989 FTA controversy with Canada, U.S. representatives were wary of any efforts to exclude cultural industries from the agreement, and Mexican officials counted on language difference as a protective membrane from Anglophone cultural influence. A number of observers saw this as offering a false sense of security. Maria y Campos (1992) noted that any "natural protection" offered by the Spanish language and Mexico's cultural idiosyncrasies is countered by Mexicans' consumption habits which change as globalization advances and the cultural-linguistic barrier becomes more permeable. García Canclini (1992) emphasized strong U.S. influence in Mexico's media and

consumer goods sectors well before NAFTA, making the agreement's impact on cultural-linguistic barriers' resiliency difficult to discern.

Public broadcasting began in Mexico in 1924 under the Ministry of Public Education, but developed on a small scale. Noriega and Leach (1979) reported long ago that limited government awareness of radio's potential and sketchy regulatory norms left key decisions regarding program content and station operations to private enterprise. The 1950s brought television, compelling the Mexican government to address structure and funding questions. It sent a commission to visit European PSBs and commercial networks in the U.S. to gather information and then recommend which model to follow. Intense lobbying and political pressure from Mexican entrepreneurs and their U.S. associates guaranteed that a commercially-supported system was adopted, and the United States technical standard (NTSC) was installed.¹⁵

This continued a pattern established by earlier industries such as music recordings, film, and radio whereby U.S. content and technology easily penetrated the Mexican market. Thus Mexico became, and largely remains, the United States' gateway market to Latin America. Educational and cultural television programs were broadcast on state-run channels, to limited audiences in the Mexico City area, beginning in 1958 (Toussaint, 1995).

The Mexican government did not formalize the rules governing television until the 1960 Federal Law of Radio and Television which served more as a regulatory regime for commercial licensees than a blueprint for government involvement. The law included two articles regulating language use. One specified that only Spanish could be broadcast unless prior permission was obtained from the Ministry of the Interior. This provision has been consistently violated since the advent of cable television and other multi-channel technologies. The other article, in the tradition of European language academies, forbade the transmission of material deemed corrosive to the Spanish language. It too has seldom been enforced.

As Roncagliolo (1997) pointed out, most public broadcasting in Latin America takes the form of community broadcasting with significant emphasis on education, strengthening democracy, and achieving sustainable development. There are significant variations across nations, as well as between rural and urban services. Orozco (1992) stressed that non-commercial broadcasting in Mexico has largely been government controlled, not public service as in the European, Canadian and U.S. cases. Two of the most influential public channels in Mexico are affiliated with educational institutions, broadcast in Mexico City, and reach other areas of the republic via pay-television systems. Channel 11, affiliated with Instituto Politécnico Nacional, focuses on classic film, documentaries, informational programs and children's programs; its average audience share is about 3% (Fuenzalida, 2000). Channel 22 is supported by the National Council for Culture and the Arts, a branch of the Education Ministry, and according to Fuenzalida (2000:21) transmits "elitist cultural programming." These channels offer an alternative, yet diminutive, voice amid the commercial din of Mexican television (Toussaint, 1995). As in other domains of contemporary Mexi-

can society, public broadcasting struggles to reconcile and appropriate the influences it receives from neighbors to the north and south.

Conclusion

Our discussion has identified downsides as well as advantages of language difference in media within and across contemporary societies. I take the firm position that advantages outweigh the drawbacks, if indeed our goal is to promote social harmony through mutual understanding and respect for diverse peoples. After all, language isn't only about communication through text, speech, and audiovisual information; it's also about identity, inclusion, and affirmation of a people's worth. The presence of multiple languages in public media underscores the value of difference in our communities. Therefore, policymakers, commercial media enterprises, and PSBs must recognize the centrality of language in the core tension between integration and diversification, or as Collins (1994) described it, between economic forces of homogenization and cultural-linguistic tendencies toward heterogeneity. Under closer scrutiny, some apparent downsides to multiple-language broadcasting are less straightforward than they first appear. Such downsides include economic inefficiencies, the threat of political instability, and possible social fragmentation.

In fulfilling their substantial service mandates, many public broadcasters have accepted the challenge of serving multilingual audiences, and, unfortunately, some have been criticized as divisive for doing so. But we should be careful not to absolve commercial broadcasters from social responsibility here because they too operate under a mandate of serving the public interest. Economic inefficiencies are anathema under the neo-liberal model impelling many of the challenges to PSB discussed throughout this book. It should be noted that neo-liberalism's emphasis on profitability endorses economic victors and condemns the vanquished. When language is tied to economic power without consideration of non-market factors like unity and social development, genuine communication yields to transmission, an unsustainable dynamic in culturally-diverse contemporary democracies.

For example, YLE network's allocation of resources to its Swedish-speaking population at two times their representation in the population would raise the ire of management (and investors) in market-driven broadcast systems. Yet isn't Finland's approach preferable to the U.S. scenario where 13% of the population is largely absent from public broadcasting – in English or Spanish – because it doesn't fit the profiles of “typical viewer,” or “contributor” (to fundraising drives)? Significantly there is little to no conflict between the two language communities which share a sense of (variable) Finnishness. Can we expect such tolerance among diverse social groups if representation of their images, stories, and languages rarely appear in broadcasting and other public media?

The threat of political instability through multilingualism is of particular concern to national polities, especially where minority languages are tied to pluralist and/or separatist aims. Several European nations encompass not only entrenched and often assertive small-language communities, but burgeoning immigrant-language groups as well. We have seen that Canada's dual-language system invited politicization of PSBs and characterization of the Francophone service, Radio Canada, as a hotbed for separatism. Similarly, indigenous groups in Mexico have employed native-language media in their struggles for greater autonomy from central government.

These examples, and others in Europe, underscore the close associations between language use and political power. Without the presence of PSBs and other alternative and/or non-commercial media, minority-language voices would be muted, public discourse constrained, and the threat of cultural homogeneity increased. The often cacophonous strains of political-linguistic division within nations signals democratic government in action, and have a salient analogue at the transnational level. Concerns regarding 'Global English' in media spill over into the political, economic and cultural arenas as power and opportunity accrue among Anglophones who often enjoy higher socio-economic status than non-English-speaking countrymen. Yet few societies embrace English's influence without reservation. Thus, PSBs are under increasing pressure to serve as bulwarks against Anglification as the international presence of English-language media content increases. Commercial broadcasters may also serve this function, not only by reinforcing local languages in domestic markets, but also by projecting them in international ones. Unfortunately, more and more of these companies are transnational concerns without deep or vested interests in domestic distinctions.

The principal Anglophone countries express concern over social fragmentation due to language diversity, but must also recognize the dangers of monolingualism. The U.S., Canada, Great Britain, and Australia receive increasing numbers of non-English-proficient immigrants, many of whom eventually participate in the mainstream culture and public discourse if to varying degrees and at different tempos. In broadcasting, industry inertia against crossing language formats or developing bilingual programming cuts in two directions. It closes avenues for creative expression by underrepresented groups offering valuable contributions to society's aesthetic and public discourse. It also stifles growth opportunities for monolingual majority-language speakers who stand to benefit socially as well as economically by communicating effectively in the native languages of others, whether at home or abroad. This is a form of cultural power tied to language that some historically monolingual and/or assimilationist nations are beginning to recognize. Social cohesion can improve when responsibility for language learning is shared among mainstream, minority language, and immigrant populations, not placed solely on the latter two. It is also widely acknowledged that the fruits of international commerce are most effectively harvested in local languages.

Even a moderate presence of multilingual media can help deter monolingualism, and PSBs are especially well positioned to perform this function.

As public service broadcasters in Europe and North America face new challenges from technological change, revised expectations, and new market conditions, they should seek the benefit of their counterparts' experiences. One benefit of fluctuation is the opportunity to make appropriate adjustments. U.S. and Canadian models may be instructive for European PSBs that seek strategies to diversify their sources of support; both PBS and CBC have subsisted in competitive commercial environments. The Canadian case is particularly useful for language diversity because dual language broadcasting has endured since the origins of public broadcasting, and weathered deepening commercialism as well as the constant presence of U.S. interests. The work of North American media economists (e.g. Wildman and Siwek, 1988; Hoskins, McFadyen & Finn, 1997) can also benefit European PSBs as they consider the market implications of language difference in the protection as well as projection of their majority and minority languages.

Several issues facing North American PSBs may be informed by European experiences. A significant challenge, especially for the U.S. and Mexico, is to improve the balance between cultural and economic elements in the media trade. Both countries should endeavor to expand their representations of minority cultures, including minority languages.

The U.S. faces multiple cultural challenges originating from the rapid diversification of its population; the European emphasis on linguistic diversity is a more viable long-term approach than continued insistence on linguistic assimilation and short-term profits. Public broadcasters are suited to initiate this change, but need to become more responsive to a broader cross-section of the public. Mexico can ill afford to continue ignoring threats to its cultural sovereignty as economic integration and political change deepen, and must consider more carefully free trade's impacts on its mainstream and minority cultures. Collectively, the NAFTA nations and potential entrants to a Free Trade Area of the Americas can benefit from observing the European Union's efforts to integrate new member nations. Although the Americas have fewer distinct national languages to include, varying accents and media production capacities mirror the three-tiered system in Europe whereby English wields more power than other large languages which are, in turn, more potent than Eastern European, lesser-spoken, and immigrant languages. In both regions broadcasters in smaller languages have difficulty projecting programming beyond their communities due to limited resources and audience sizes. When these voices have difficulty being heard, we all lose.

PSBs may serve a vital role by opening more spaces for the expression of difference, allowing an array of subgroups to be heard and seen on their own terms. What more positive contribution could public service broadcasters make to political, economic and social cohesion in modern multicultural society?

Notes

1. Phillipson (2003: 15-16) identifies language policy overlap with these areas: culture, commerce, foreign affairs, education, and research.
2. The critical scholar McChesney (2003) echoed the economists' language advantage argument in asserting that the BBC enjoys an internationalization option not available to other European PSBs.
3. Hoskins, McFadyen and Finn (1997: 32) describe the cultural discount concept: "a particular television programme, film or video rooted in one culture, and thus attractive in the home market where viewers share a common knowledge and way of life, will have diminished appeal elsewhere as viewers find it difficult to identify with the style, values, beliefs, history, myths, institutions, physical environment, and behavioural patterns."
4. It should be noted that bridge languages connect speakers in less private settings such as travel, business, and media, but most people express their cultural ties and more intimate facets of their identity in their native language.
5. "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" (cited in Nitsche, 2001: 4).
6. Figures provided on February 1, 2005. The author thanks the editors for assistance in obtaining this data.
7. Quoted from http://europa.eu.int/comm/avpolicy/intro/intro_en.htm.
8. The French acronym for "Measures to Encourage the Development of an Audiovisual Industry."
9. The first tier being occupied by English, and the second tier the major European languages other than English.
10. Data retrieved from CIA World Factbook, January 24, 2005. <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ca.html#People>
11. Population figure taken from CIA World Factbook, January 24, 2005. <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/mx.html#People>. Language distribution figures retrieved from www.ethnologue.com on January 24, 2005. <http://www.ethnologue.com/show%5Fcountry.asp?name=Mexico>
12. Population figure retrieved January, 24 2005 from <http://www.census.gov/>. Language distribution figures retrieved January 24, 2005, from U.S. Census Bureau "American Fact Finder" http://factfinder.census.gov/bf/_lang=en_vt_name=DEC_2000_SF3_U_DP2_geo_id=01000US.html
13. For population growth figures see Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2004-2005 available online at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/04statab/pop.pdf>.
14. See <http://www.pbs.org/speak/about/guide/> and linked pages for more on the "Do You Speak American?" program.
15. The commission suggested in its report that Mexican audiences were neither prepared for, or interested in, high-brow content such as appeared on the BBC and other European PSBs (Noriega and Leach, 1979).

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Epilogue
The Public Service Nun
A Subjective Tale of Fiction and Facts

Christian S. Nissen

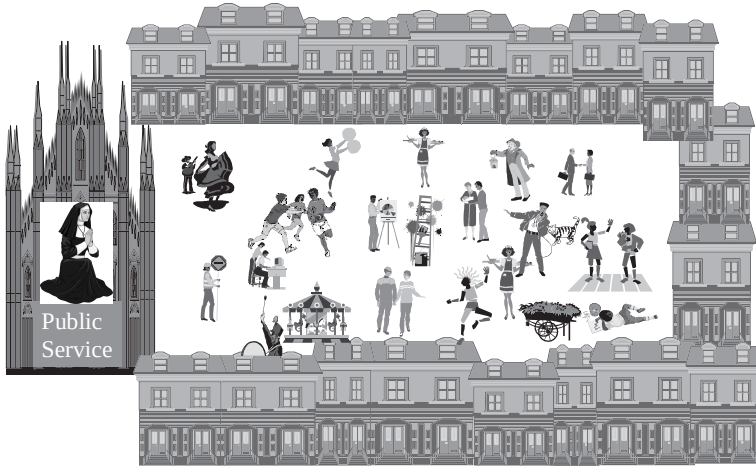
The Public Service Nun came alive at a Public Broadcasting International (PBI) conference in Belfast in 1999. Since then she has travelled around the world. Thanks to the many comments and suggestions I've received as her custodian along the way, her story has gradually evolved in line with changes in public service broadcasting in its political and economic environment. She was presented at the RIPE conference in Helsinki in 2002 and had not herself thought to show up again in that connection. But recent developments in Brussels and in many European domestic settings convinced her custodian to add another chapter for the RIPE@2004 conference.

The story of the Public Service Nun has never been published before. Like all fairy tales with a moral, it is meant to live orally in direct communication. But as also in the case of public broadcasting, a nun can be convinced to compromise a little if given the opportunity to reach a broader audience.

Once upon a time
in the “good old days” of broadcasting monopoly

In all European cities you find a central square that has been frequented since middle ages. From surrounding country side and nearby villages, people came to the market square to trade goods and buy for the household. But of course the square was always for much more than conducting the business of commerce. Visitors exchanged news and rumours, had something to eat and drink, enjoyed the fights, the music, the dances and all assorted entertainments.

At any time when people felt the need for something of deeper substance, one could easily find the big, beautiful Public Service Dome – or Cathedral, if you like. It dominated one side of the square. The gate opened wide for everyone. Within the confines of the cathedral – far from the bustling turbulence of the square – the nun would preach her public service gospel. Her stories weren't the most sensational and the organ music playing softly in

Figure 1. Public Service in the time of monopoly

the background wasn't popular songs or music to dance by. But what happened in the dome was an important part of everyday life for nearly every citizen. It was easily discernible from the life of the square. There were no other places of its kind. The Public Service Dome had a monopoly on valued services and was, as such, a cultural cornerstone of European society.

And it came to pass, the monopoly ended

Close to the end of last century, this situation came gradually to an end as the activities on the market square expanded. Shops opened in the long row of houses round the square as more people came and set up businesses offering goods and services of all kinds. There was money to be made; a lot of money. Some services bore a resemblance to those offered by the public service nun, although no other gave precisely the same quality of substance, depth or variety.

Even so and without much thought, more and more people on the square gradually turned their back to the public service dome and nun. They were busy browsing all the shops and taking part in the many amusements offered by beautiful young dancers and new foreign musicians visiting from abroad; fewer and fewer thought to pay their respects to the nun.

After a while it even became difficult to find the dome, much less the public service nun. Tall buildings were raised in front of the cathedral, blocking it from sight. The formerly dominating dome increasingly seemed a small wayside chapel. Adding insult to injury, merchants on the square built a

Figure 2. Public Service in time of competition: A dilemma for the Public Service nun



narrow gate, effectively blocking the way to the cathedral. Strong gatekeepers equipped with high tech tools jealously guarded the entrance, making it even more difficult to even find the venue for the dwindling few who still wanted to lend their ears to the messages of the nun.

The public service nun was caught in a difficult dilemma. She could concentrate her activities on the few who, despite all the temptations on the square and the new hindrances, were faithful in attendance. Why worry about the many that apparently didn't recognize any need for her services? Why not be happy and satisfied with the faithful, even if a much smaller flock? Had she asked her small flock for their opinion, they would have undoubtedly advised that course, continuing her services just for them. Forget the herd on the square. It was their choice not to visit.

But of course the public service nuns have always been inclined to missionary work. They are obliged to at least try to reach beyond the sanctified boundaries. They have a commission to include where others are tempted to exclude. After many years of monopoly this in-dwelling urge had developed into an obligation of societal scale.

Thus, it was necessary to leave the cathedral and go out into the market square to meet the audience. The public service nun was painfully aware of the risks. Within the cathedral she had a traditional role that distinguished her by habit, so to say, from the crowded market square. By mingling in the marketplace, she would run the risk of becoming just another among the many. And think of all the dubious activities happening there! She might get some of the mud from the square on her immaculate gown. Or, if lifting her skirt to prevent that, she might disclose so much leg she could be taken for one of the indelicate dancers.

It has never been easy for public service nuns, but this was an especially difficult and troublesome period – except for those who had fallen asleep in a silent corner of the cathedral. For a pretty long time the public service nun just didn't know what to do. Through the open door to the market square she could hear people talking about her, wondering if she had any future role. More than one singer and dancer in the market place questioned the need for any cathedral, heaping scorn upon the public service nun. “Any thing she can do, we can do *much* better” they boasted – while counting the content of their purses.

So the public service nun went out to meet her audience...

After a long period in serious doubt, the nun finally ventured out from the safety of the cathedral to take her first daring steps in the open air of the market square. She was well aware of the risks and of the harsh critique she would receive from the tiny congregation of believers back in the cathedral. This was a new beginning and much was needed to be done. So, what did she do?

Figure 3. The public service nun in the market square



First she knew – or rather discovered – that after the long years of monopoly she had to clarify her mission anew, and thereby the remit of her activities. Being in close contact with her audience was a necessary condition if she was to fulfil her obligations. But that wasn't sufficient because she must at the same time uphold her calling as a clear alternative to all her materialist competitors. Otherwise, there was no reason for her to be in the market at all.

Secondly and soon, she learned that being in the market and maintaining a distinct appearance was not enough either. One way or another, she must tell her story in the language understood by the audience. So she introduced new tunes to update her songs and worked hard to develop new qualities in her offer. She opened new channels of communication and even introduced new technologies enabling her to reach out to every corner of the market square. She didn't have resources in abundance like her rivals, but she learned to economise within the limitations she had to live and work with.

...Verily, she found her place in the market place

After some years of trial and quite a few errors, the nun found her place in the market. She doesn't have the dominating role enjoyed in the days of monopoly, of course. People on the square dance to many tunes and listen to sermons about missions other than public service. But that doesn't bother the nun as long as she has the fair possibility to reach out to all in order to secure regular contact with everybody on the square.

She – and what was much more important, also many of the people on the square and those in the city council – discovered new sides and aspects of her mission. Although the plethora of services on the market brought many advantages, in combination with other developments in the city they also had a disintegrating influence on the community. People now think more within their narrow personal interests and some times even forget they are citizens living together in the same town. Many of the cherished stories of the town, having lived from generation to generation, are fading from memory. New songs introduced from abroad pushed native songs of the city into the background. It has become a challenge and special obligation for the public service nun to help save cultural heritages while also taking an active part in creating new stories in the dialect of the city and new melodies in tune with local costumes. Suddenly the songs and tales of the public service nun have become one of the few cohesive forces, binding its citizens together in a community.

In this way a “dual market model” developed on the market squares of Europe, a in many ways a model that has brought new qualities and secured old values. The healthy competition between the nun and her revenue-oriented rivals has forced both to keep on their toes. Travellers from other continents are visiting the dual market squares of Europe to learn their virtues. Some are coming from countries where the market square is dominated totally by merchants who, lacking competition from public service, are lowering the quality of their offer and raising prices. Others come from places where the market square is totally controlled by a city council that kidnapped the nun for their mouthpiece.

Figure 4. The dual market model of Europe

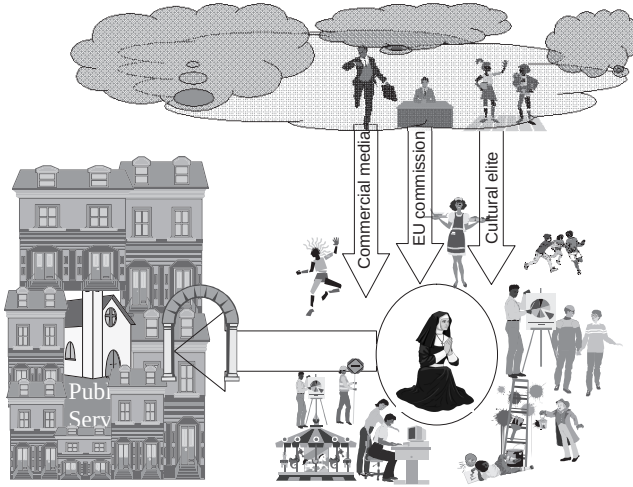
To the surprise of many and to the dismay of some of her rivals, the nun has achieved remarkable success at home. But wait, maybe it is too much of a success?

Strong forces are trying to push the nun back into the chapel

The success of the nun in establishing herself firmly in the market square and securing a balanced coexistence with her rivals is now menaced by dark clouds on the horizon. The winds of opposition are gathering to push her back into the sequestered oblivion of the little chapel.

Suddenly commercial rivals who once favoured competition and praised the vitalising forces of the market place are distressed by the popularity of the nun. They want the nun to get out of the square and go back to the confines of the chapel. They seek to restrict her activities to traditional prayers and hymns, played only in solemn tones on the old church organ. For them, the activities of the nun are acceptable as long as they only attract the diminishing group of believers on the few benches left in the chapel. They are self-righteously against the nun using any new-fangled means of communication that enable her to reach out and contact her audience. That is called trespassing, even transgressing, the narrow and well guarded gate they construct.

Meanwhile back at the chapel, the cultural elite that used to have the nun all to themselves are dissatisfied that she's been hanging around the market square. They certainly support the special funding of the nun's activities through the compulsory collection of donations to their church, but they can't

Figure 5. Strong forces are threatening the public service nun

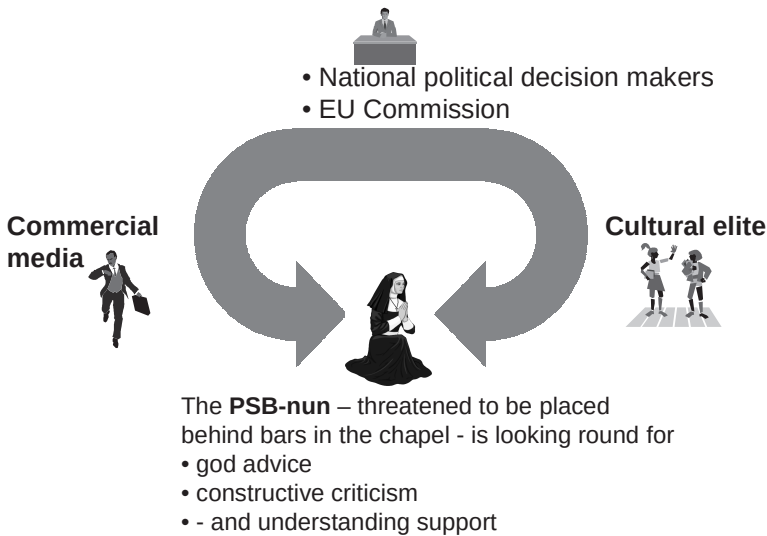
understand that such scarce resources should be used to support popular activities. Such sordid services should be left to the money changers in the market square, they argue. Although everybody participates in the collection, contributing their money too, these believers think the funds should only be used to support the very special interests of this faithful few: Prayers, sermons, the old traditional hymns and other organ music. The once mighty cathedral and now little chapel is best suited to holy restricted activities.

Thus and in a strange way, the merchants on the market square and the tiny cultural elite in the chapel, which are not normally observed to be in harmonious accord, comprise a special alliance. If from opposite angles and for contrary reasons, this alliance puts the nun under harsh double pressure as they co-operate to force her back under the shadow of the dome. The nun is worried, of course. She has listened to her rivals on the square and her little faithful congregation. Although she well understands the arguments, she has become ever more convinced that it is in fact her duty to stay with her flock in the square.

Then came a long period of quarrels in which strong words not typically any part of the nun's vocabulary were used rather boldly. Her commercial rivals trumped off to the city council to demand their assistance, albeit without much success. The counsellors summoned the nun and asked her to kindly refrain from one or two of the more spectacular songs and successful tales, and perhaps to add an extra prayer a couple of times each Sunday. But they mainly concluded, "We are not in a position to decide what a nun can do or not do as long she is following her remit as established by the law of the land". They were of course referring to well known principles about the independent relations between the council and the church.

Did that stop the frustrated merchants on the square? No, indeed. They charged off in a huff to the newly established international Union of Competition Attendants. Those are the people in charge of keeping a close eye on the market square to restore peace and calm when merchants surpass reasonable limits in their rough and tumble fight for larger market share. These Attendants are familiar with every assorted and unscrupulous trick associated with cunning merchants. They had therefore developed very complicated accounting methods and clever control mechanisms which, to the satisfaction of the city councils and the citizens, had brought more than one of the more dubious merchants to the pillory in stocks at the corner of the market square.

Figure 6. The public service nun under double pressure



Unfortunately the Attendants had never dealt with the activities of nuns. They knew the terms and details of trade in most other kinds of goods and services brought to the market, but how can one evaluate the reasonable price of a prayer or the cost of a well-tuned sermon? On the other hand, they reasoned, a service is a service is a service. So, they rummaged around for similar cases and stumbled across a previous conflict that had been successfully resolved, one that involved drivers of horse carriages. “Hey presto”, they declared in their document addressed to the merchants and nuns in the market squares of Europe. “Just do as the horse carriage drivers! Follow the rules we laid down for them, and we will not interfere”.

Not surprisingly, of course, the merchants were unsatisfied. They got however energetically busy foreseeing a wide range of new ways of putting the nun under pressure by measuring her activities of nuns according to yardsticks reinterpreted from the aforementioned horse driver case. On her

side, the nun wasn't happy either because, in any event, the entire affair was so complicated that few nuns and fewer city councils would ever be able to properly understand or thoroughly follow guidelines that were actually about horses, carts and drivers rather than missions, gospels and congregations.

What's a poor nun to do?

For her part, the nun is becoming more and more worried by these 'developments' – if that's what they actually are. She has experience dealing with all sorts of pressures and regulations at the behest of people not familiar with her faith. But never had she imagined that her tales, prayers and songs would be put in the driver's seat of a horse carriage. For the first time in many years she realises that a future behind the gate in the confines of the chapel far removed from the daily life of her congregation could in fact be the result. She is painfully aware of the need for a lot of rethinking, evaluation and also reform on her own part. She is prepared to go to confession, and she would admit an impure thought or two committed under stressful circumstances. But will that be enough? It seems doubtful.

In search of wise counsel and informed advice, the nun turns to the scholars of academia. In case one might wish to entertain her petition, here's a short list from her evening prayers:

- Compass and maps for the difficult navigation between the Scylla of populism and the Charybdis of elitism
- Better tools for evaluation and measurement of quality in her services
- Help in the development of ways to be more innovation and to enhance creativity
- Advice on how she can be better in telling her story and explain her obligations and importance to society
- Help to understand the secrets of horse carriage driving and the minds and thoughts of the clever attendants
- Active participation from the academy in the public discourse about her role and mission

And what can the PSB-nun offer in return? Not very much. She has no authority to pardon or to absolve any sins. Speaking on her behalf as a custodian, I can only thank you for having so patiently listened to this tale.

About the Authors

MARKO ALA-FOSSI (D.Soc.Sc. 2005 University of Tampere) is Senior Lecturer in Radio at the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Tampere, Finland.

ROBERT K. AVERY (Ph.D. 1971 The Pennsylvania State University) is Professor and Director of Development in the Department of Communication, at The University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA.

JO L.H. BARDOEL (Ph.D. 1997 University of Amsterdam) is a Senior Researcher at the Amsterdam School of Communications Research (ASCoR) and the Department of Communication of the University of Amsterdam and an Endowed Professor in Media Policy at the Radboud University Nijmegen (the Netherlands).

HANNE BRUUN (M.A. & Ph.D. 1997 University of Aarhus) is Associate Professor in Media Studies and Head of Studies at the Department of Information and Media Studies at the University of Aarhus, Denmark.

TOMAS COPPENS (Ph.D. 2004 Ghent University) is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Communication Sciences at Ghent University in Belgium and the coordinator of a review of the Flemish public broadcaster VRT, commissioned by the Flemish Government.

GREGORY FERRELL LOWE (Ph.D. 1992 University of Texas at Austin) is the Head of YLE Programme Development (YLEdge) in Ylesiradio, the Finnish public service broadcasting company, and a docent in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Tampere, Finland.

UNNI FROM (M.A. 1998, Ph.D. 2003 University of Aarhus) is Assistant Professor in Media Studies at the Department of Information and Media Studies at the University of Aarhus, Denmark

LEEN d'HAENENS (Ph.D. 1994 University of Ghent, Belgium) is Associate Professor at the Departments of Communication of the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium) and Radboud University Nijmegen (The Netherlands).

PER JAUERT (M.A. 1975 University of Aarhus) is Associate Professor in Media Studies at the Department of Information and Media Studies at the University of Aarhus, Denmark.

GRAHAM MURDOCK (M.A. University of Sussex 1968) is Reader in the Sociology of Culture in the Department of Social Sciences at Loughborough University.

BRIAN McNAIR is Professor of journalism and communication at the University of Strathclyde, Scotland.

CHRISTIAN S. NISSEN (M.A. 1975 University of Copenhagen & Aarhus) is currently an independent advisor in media and public management and has held different positions in teaching, research and public administration. From 1994-2004 he served as Director General of the Danish Broadcasting Corporation, DR.

ALLERD A.L. PEETERS (M.A. in psychology 1977 and in sociology 1978 University of Nijmegen) is a senior advisor and researcher at the Audience Research Department of Netherlands Public Broadcasting (Publieke Omroep) and a researcher and lecturer at the Department of Communication of The Radboud University Nijmegen and in the Media and Journalism MA Program at Erasmus University Rotterdam (the Netherlands).

LOUISE PHILLIPS (Ph.D. 1993 London School of Economics) is an Associate Professor in Communication Studies at the University of Roskilde, Denmark.

ROBERT G. PICARD (Ph.D. 1983 University of Missouri) is the Hamrin Professor of Media Economics and director of the Media Management and Transformation Centre at Jönköping International Business School, Jönköping University, Sweden.

MARC RABOY (Ph.D. McGill University 1986) is Beaverbrook Chair in Ethics, Media and Communications and Professor in the Department of Art History and Communications Studies at McGill University, Canada.

ERIC SARANOVITZ (M.A. 1996 Hebrew University) is completing his Ph.D. in the Department of Culture and Communication at New York University and is an Instructor of Communication at Denison University, USA.

PADDY SCANNELL (M.A. Oxon 1970) is a professor of broadcasting history in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Westminster, United Kingdom.

KIM CHRISTIAN SCHRØDER (M.A. 1981 University of Aarhus) is Professor of Communication, Centre for User-Oriented Communication Studies, Roskilde University, Denmark, and currently Head of Communication Studies.

JEANETTE STEEMERS (Ph.D. 1990 University of Bath) is Principal Lecturer, Television Studies, School of Media and Cultural Production, De Montfort University, Leicester, United Kingdom.

DAVID TARAS (Ph.D. University of Toronto 1983) is University Professor and Professor in the Faculty of Communication and Culture at the University of Calgary, Canada.

ARNE WESSBERG is President of the European Broadcasting Union [EBU] and has held different positions in broadcasting, media and cultural administration. From 1994-2005 he served as Director General of the Finnish Broadcasting Company, YLE. He is also a member of the Board of Directors for Nokia and a member of the International Council of NATAS.

KENTON T. WILKINSON (Ph.D. 1995 University of Texas at Austin) is Associate Professor and Graduate Advisor of Record in the Department of Communication at the University of Texas at San Antonio, USA.

Director and Administration

Director: Ulla Carlsson
Telephone: +46 31 773 12 19
Fax: +46 31 773 46 55
ulla.carlsson@nordicom.gu.se

Administration and sales:
Anne Claesson
Telephone: +46 31 773 12 16
Fax: +46 31 773 46 55
anne.claesson@nordicom.gu.se

Technical editing and webmaster:
Per Nilsson
Telephone: +46 31 773 46 54
Fax: +46 31 773 46 55
per.nilsson@nordicom.gu.se

Field of Activities

Media and Communication Research

Publications

Editor: Ulla Carlsson
Telephone: +46 31 773 12 19
Fax: +46 31 773 46 55
ulla.carlsson@nordicom.gu.se

Research Documentation

Nordic Co-ordinator:
Claus Kragh Hansen
University and State Library
Universitetsparken
DK-8000 Aarhus C, Denmark

Telephone: +45 89 46 20 69
Fax: +45 89 46 20 50
ckh@statsbiblioteket.dk

Media Trends and Media Statistics

Nordic Media Trends

Nordic Co-ordinator: Eva Harrie
Telephone: +46 31 773 46 58
Fax: +46 31 773 46 55
eva.harrie@nordicom.gu.se

Nordic Media Policy

Editor: Terje Flisen
terjef@nordicmedia.info

European Media Policy

Editor: Anna Celsing
anna.celsing@skynet.be

The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media

Scientific Co-ordinator:
Cecilia von Feilitzen
Telephone: +46 8 608 48 58
Fax: +46 8 608 41 00
cecilia.von.feilitzen@sh.se

Information Co-ordinator:
Catharina Bucht
Telephone: +46 31 773 49 53
Fax: +46 31 773 46 55
catharina.bucht@nordicom.gu.se

National Centres

Nordicom-Denmark

University and State Library
Universitetsparken
DK-8000 Aarhus C, Denmark

Nordicom-Finland

University of Tampere
FIN-33014 Tampere, Finland

Nordicom-Norway

Department of Information
Science and Media Studies
University of Bergen
Postboks 7800
N-5020 Bergen, Norway

Nordicom-Sweden

Göteborg University
Box 713
SE 405 30 Göteborg, Sweden
Fax: +46 31 773 46 55

Media and Communication Research

Peder Grøngaard
Telephone: +45 89 46 20 68
Fax: +45 89 46 20 50
pg@statsbiblioteket.dk

Media and Communication Research

Eija Poteri
Telephone: +358 3 3551 70 45
Fax: +358 3 3551 6248
eija.poteri@uta.fi

Media and Communication Research

Pernille Riise Lothe
Telephone: +47 55 58 91 40
Fax: +47 55 58 91 49
pernille.lothe@infomedia.uib.no

Media and Communication Research

Roger Palmqvist
Telephone: +46 31 773 12 20
roger.palmqvist@nordicom.gu.se

Karin Poulsen
Telephone: +46 31 773 44 19
karin.poulsen@nordicom.gu.se

Media Trends and Media Statistics

MediaNorway

Nina Bjørnstad
Telephone: +47 55 58 91 26
nina.bjornstad@infomedia.uib.no

Media Trends and Media Statistics in Sweden

Ulrika Facht
Telephone: +46 31 773 13 06
ulrika.facht@nordicom.gu.se

Karin Hellingwerf
Telephone: +46 31 773 19 92
karin.hellingwerf@nordicom.gu.se

Staffan Sundin
Telephone: +46 36 16 45 82
staffan.sundin@nordicom.gu.se

In recent years public service broadcasting seems caught in a radicalized dilemma between two obligations. To serve and preserve national culture and identity has for decades been an essential mandated obligation. At the same time, being a 'window to the world' has also been central to the remit. How can PSB handle the challenges of being custodians of diluted national identities amid a variety of heterogeneous cultures on the one hand, and simultaneously acting as explorers of global orientation on the other? The ideal of serving an Enlightenment mission has always been central to the PSB role and function, to its legitimating remit. This mission is a defining strand in the DNA of public service broadcasting and it is still relevant today because many of the cultural issues it was originally instituted to partially address are recurrent and growing uncertainties in light of globalization. Integration and fragmentation is a fundamental contradiction of our day. Although the traditional Enlightenment mission is no longer operable, developing a newly enlightened cultural mission is essential for PSB legitimacy. Thus, cultural dilemmas in public service broadcasting framed the RIPE@2004 conference – *Mission, Market and Management: Public Service Broadcasting and the Cultural Commons*.

The authors in this volume discuss the contemporary relevance of PSB as a culturally obligated and culturally oriented enterprise. They do this from many perspectives and focussed on various dimensions that, taken together, clarify why public service broadcasting is about much more than transmitting content. The issues treated herein speak fundamentally to how broadcasting ought to be socially harnessed, at least in fair measure, to beneficially serve a variety of contemporary cultural demands.

NORDICOM

Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research

Göteborg University

Box 713, SE-405 30 Göteborg, Sweden

Telephone +46 31 773 10 00 (op.)

Fax +46 31 773 46 55

E-mail: nordicom@nordicom.gu.se

www.nordicom.gu.se

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GÖTEBORG
UNIVERSITY